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The Limits of *Posibilismo*: The Censors and Antonio Buero Vallejo

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The Limits of *Posibilismo*: The Censors and Antonio Buero Vallejo

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Dedication

To my wife Maria Inez, for her patience, her support and her love, and to my son Alex,
my greatest inspiration.

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The Limits of *Posibilismo*: The Censors and Antonio Buero Vallejo

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The intent of this dissertation is to examine the various means by which Antonio Buero Vallejo succeeded in expressing social criticism in his dramatic works and yet avoid the censorship of the Franco dictatorship. Much of the success of his theater is rooted in his ability to write theatrical works that on a textual level did not provoke the censors by directly stating themes that would be subject to censorship. Rather, they developed a progression of concepts on a textual and extra-textual level that, in their totality, produced associative ideas through which his social criticism was expressed subtly while still conforming to the framework of guidelines that the censors used to evaluate theater. Text and staging of his plays were mediated in a way that the combination of the two produced an effect on its audience that allowed them to interpret messages of social criticism while still adhering to the constraints of the censors. This was the product of his philosophy of *posibilismo*, or writing within the limitations of what is possible under censorship. This approach represented a contrast to the more

militant theater of Alfonso Sastre, who criticized this accommodation of censorship as being conformist. What this study intends to present is to trace the development of various symbolic, allegoric and structural elements that *posibilismo* embodied as an approach to Buero's plays to show how criticism is developed throughout the course of the works and how this criticism was interpreted by the censors. Based on the documentation of the censors located in the Archivo General de la Administración Civil in Alcalá de Henares, Spain, this dissertation will examine both the success and failure of *posibilismo* with the censors in order to better understand how Buero applied this approach and what limitations existed to its successful application. Besides the suppression of certain phrases in many of Buero's works, three of his plays, *Aventura en lo gris*, *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, and a single performance of *Palabras en la arena*, were prohibited during the course of the dictatorship. The circumstances behind these prohibitions will be addressed with the intent of furthering an understanding of the censorial process.

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Chapter 1: Buero, Sastre and the *posibilismo/imposibilismo* debate

In 1939 when Francisco Franco and the Nationalist forces under his command emerged victorious from the Spanish Civil War, Spain was still an ideologically fragmented nation, its people divided in their political beliefs. Despite the flight of the Republican leaders as well as the hundreds of thousands that escaped Nationalist-occupied territory, millions of Spaniards who did not support Franco and his vision of Spain remained. In order to consolidate and hold on to power, the regime used censorship as a means of controlling information in order to promote its policies and values, as well as to silence the voices of dissent. The purpose of censorship was ultimately one of controlling thought in Spanish society in order to establish and maintain political control and develop a new society. All literature and press came under the scrutiny of the regime, ultimately giving the government control over what could and could not be said. To this end, language expressing opposition to the regime or promoting philosophies contrary to Nationalist doctrines (i.e. democratic ideals, socialism, communism, etc.) was prohibited, even to extent of revising or banning texts written prior to the Civil War.

Unlike other dictatorships of the post-war era in the Spanish-speaking world, such as the military governments of Argentina or Chile, the goal of censorship in Spain was not simply to restrict political (leftist) ideologies. Censorship was also applied to promote moral and religious ideals, adhering to a strict interpretation of Catholic faith. The Franco regime, supported by the Falange party as well as Opus Dei, took an ultra-conservative position on issues of public morality and decency, prohibiting ideas and

actions that did not conform to the orthodoxy of the Church. Although many other nations legislated (and in some cases, still do legislate) certain moral restrictions on expression, such as a ban on pornography, Francoist censorship went much further in establishing a control over what was deemed acceptable for public consumption. Language discussing or alluding to anything deemed a sin by the Church, ranging from sexuality to suicide to questioning Church doctrine or practices were taboo in literature and repressed by the censors, unless such references were made in condemnation of sin with the end goal of promoting religious values. The intent of these prohibitions was to protect Spain from what the dictatorship saw as the corruption of traditional values that had occurred under the Second Republic. To this end, Franco saw himself not only as a military and political figure, but also as a defender of Spanish tradition and the Catholic faith. His intent was to protect the Spanish people from being usurped by what he viewed as foreign ideologies that eroded the Spanish heritage. This perspective especially applied to Communism and Freemasonry, which he not only viewed as a political threat, but also associated directly with atheism and the destruction of moral decency (Preston, pgs. 185, 323-324). It is in this context that the conservative Catholic values of the *Caudillo* and his supporters merged with political concerns to form a model for what Spanish censorship was intended to promote.

During the course of the Franco regime, all genres of literature as well as mass media were subjected to intense scrutiny in order to ensure the ideological “quality” of what Spaniards read, saw and heard. Of the genres of literature that received examination by the dictatorship, the theater of Spain came under especially intense observation by the censors. Theater, unlike the novel or poetry, is not only a literary genre, but also a

performance-based art, like the cinema. As such, theater was included in the category of mass media and approached with a greater degree of vigilance. As a genre, theater has the ability to become a physically represented spectacle capable of affecting audiences not through cold words on a page, but on a visual and aural level as the actors interpreted the script into a live performance. This, combined with the fact that it is a medium designed for viewing by large audiences, made the theater a form of communication that could reach a large and general public and provoke dialog among the spectators; qualities that the regime did not wish to promote unless they controlled the messages being transmitted.

Spain traditionally has had a strong theatrical heritage, dating back to even before the Golden Age, when the genre developed into a mainstream form of entertainment. For centuries theater has been a medium for communicating moral, ethical, and political ideas to the masses, beginning with religious-oriented works such as the various *autos sacramentales* of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, evolving into more concrete, secular dramas focusing on morality and ethics exemplified by the works of authors such as Tirso de Molina and Calderón de la Barca. As the medium evolved, so did efforts to curtail “undesirable” language and imagery on the stage. Censorship, already present in the publication of books, was extended to the Spanish theater for the first time in 1597 when Felipe II, mourning the death of his daughter, suspended the performance of public spectacles, and used the opportunity to prohibit offensive acts and language from being expressed. Upon his death, theatrical performances returned to the stage under the reign of Felipe III, but by this time they were placed under the watchful eyes of the Inquisition. The Church petitioned for another ban on theatrical production which was instituted for a

short time in 1665 after the death of Felipe IV. The primary motivation for this ban came from the Church's desire to curb blasphemy in many of the comedies of the time (Cramsie, pg. 2). These initial examples of censorship in Spain set a precedent that would periodically be repeated throughout the course of modern Spanish history when the monarchy saw it necessary to control or repress moral or political expression contrary to what was deemed acceptable by the government and the Church.

As the centuries went on, the theater went through changes reflecting the times, both in terms of stylistics and message, as well as in the scope of what was permitted and prohibited in the theater. By the twentieth century, theater had evolved to project a content mirroring the atmosphere of the moment, with works reflecting the various social, political and artistic ideologies present at the time. In the years prior to the Civil War, works such as Valle-Inclán's *Luces de Bohemia* or García Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba* aspired to represent a new theater that was more engaged in political and social argumentation. These works, and many others like them, reflected an increased attention to the contemporary problems of Spain and served as the authors' way of expressing criticism of society in a time that the political scene of Spain was becoming increasingly polarized. During the Civil War, the role of theater as a medium to communicate political ideology was furthered by its application as a tool of mass media. Both the Republican and Nationalist camps used theater not only to entertain their troops and boost morale, but also used it as a tool for ideological indoctrination by performing plays that glorified the ideals of each camp and demonized their enemy. Authors on both sides wrote short pieces intended to bolster sympathy for their cause as well as to illustrate the evils that the enemy represented to Spain. To this end theater took on the role of propaganda,

directly impacting thought and belief with the intent of molding the spectator's values and political persuasion.

By the end of the war, the Republican forces and their supporters, defeated, found their literature and ideals silenced in the face of the Nationalist victory. It was with the intent of curbing anti-nationalist sentiment and propagating the ideals of the Franco regime that censorship was reintroduced to Spain, first to the Nationalist-occupied territories during the war, and later to the entire nation under the newly installed government in 1939. As a result of the laws imposed on expression, playwrights, in order not to have their ideas repressed, were faced with three options. The first was to abandon Spain for exile abroad, an option exercised by a number of notable playwrights such as Max Aub, Fernando Arrabal, Rafael Alberti, and Jacinto Grau and, for many years, Alejandro Casona¹. The second choice was to conform with the norms of censorship, in cases to the point of creating a theater devoid of themes of a critical nature, such as comedic sainetes and zarzuelas written to entertain the masses. Some authors did so out of conviction, as they were persuaded by Nationalist ideology and openly embraced the regime. Many of the authors that remained in Spain after the Civil War, however, did so reluctantly for not wanting to abandon Spain, and chose to conform to the restrictions placed on their art in order to continue their trade. The third option left to playwrights of the era was to not conform, but rather find new and innovative strategies for writing

¹ Casona returned to Spain from exile in 1962, after an absence of more than 25 years. Many critics suggest that the theater he wrote in his final years took on a different, less socially critical character than the works he wrote early in his career prior to the Civil War, and ultimately did not reflect the perspective of his peers in Spain and in exile. See Ruiz Ramón 226-227 for more on this topic.

theater capable of expressing social commentary within the confines of what was allowed.

Among the authors that fell into this final category was one of Spain's most revered dramatists, Antonio Buero Vallejo. Buero emerged from the Franco era as Spain's leading playwright as a result of his ability to adapt and evolve his theater to pass the standards of the censors. Despite the limitations imposed by the censors, he was enormously successful in writing and staging his works in a time when many of his contemporaries found the constraints of literary repression difficult to overcome. Besides being able to bring most of his theater to the stage despite the problems of censorship, Buero's theater was also noteworthy for two additional reasons. The first is that his work was openly received by the theater-going public, giving him the financial success to allow him to devote all of his attention to his art. The second is that in his theater he maintained a level of social criticism and consciousness that topically made his works relevant to the reality of Franco-era Spain. Unlike many other playwrights of his time, he was able to address themes that took society to issue in a time when doing so was difficult as a result of the governmental restrictions imposed on the theater and the political consequences that such social stances could incur. Despite these impediments, Buero emerged from the Franco era as one of Spain's leading playwrights, having received acclaim in his native country as well as on the international scene.

For Buero, theater was not just a form of popular entertainment, but also a vehicle for social commentary and change. "La finalidad social del teatro es, a mi juicio, crítica y removedora, cuando criticar y remover son las actividades más necesarias..." (Obra

Completa II, pg. 690)². Theater became a means through which Buero could challenge the injustices and moral wrongs of society, a means to communicate thought in a time when thought was highly regulated and controlled. Buero was not a militant author writing with the intention of provoking or entering into open confrontation with the regime, but rather a humanist with concerns for the society he lived in, both on a national as well as a global level. The themes that he espoused in his works centered greatly on the human condition, both in Spain and on a global level. Although many of Buero's dramas were set in Spain, the messages of his works transcended the boundaries of his nation and had relevance to people everywhere, providing his works with a universality that accounts for its success throughout the world.

Buero's social conscience was a product of his earlier life experiences. In 1939, near the end of the Spanish Civil War, he became indirectly involved with a pro-Republican group with ideological ties to the Communist Party. As a result of these liaisons he was subsequently arrested, tried, imprisoned, and condemned to death. His death sentence was eventually commuted, and Buero was ultimately released from prison in 1946 (Giuliano, pgs. 75-76). His experiences during the seven years he was incarcerated as a political prisoner as well as events he witnessed during those years would much later resurface as themes in many of his works. From his own life he would draw inspiration for dramas concerning concepts such as torture, murder, justice, punishment, and political oppression.

² Obra Completa will hereafter be referred to as O.C..

Buero began his career in writing shortly after his release from prison, abandoning his first artistic vocation as a painter. In 1949, Buero represented his first play, *Historia de una escalera*, marking his arrival on the Spanish theatrical scene and inaugurating a new style of Spanish theater which has come to be referred to as "neo-realist", or a return to settings and circumstances reflecting the average, contemporary lives of ordinary people. Some of his works, including *Historia de una escalera*, were labeled as such because rather than focus on the creation and presentation of idealized, less-than-typical characters, the characters and circumstances being presented in his works represented real, down-to-earth people and topics with which the audience could identify. Buero's neo-realist approach to theater allowed for an audience to identify with what they saw, projecting a "slice-of-life" to his public that created a direct psychological connection between fiction and reality.

In bringing *Historia de una escalera* to the stage, Buero also introduced an existential quality to Spanish theater not previously seen by developing the idea that each generation is potentially doomed to repeat the mistakes of the last. However, in contrast to the existentialist theater of Jean-Paul Sartre, Samuel Beckett or Alfonso Sastre, Buero's drama provided endings that suggested that an escape from fate was possible if the protagonists were willing to actively pursue such a course. By giving the drama such an ending, he instilled in his work an element of hope by not offering a definitive conclusion and allowing such an escape for his characters. Over time this type of ending, characteristic of most of his works, had led to the use of terms such as *teatro de esperanza* and "open-ended plays" which have become synonymous with Buero's work.

Historia de una escalera was followed by two other big successes that quickly established Buero as a major playwright of his generation. The first was his only one-act play, *Palabras en la arena*. This work, in its initial debut, was only performed for one night, on December 19, 1949 in the Teatro Español. This one-time staging in a private setting (called *teatro de cámara*) was for an audience composed of students as part of a contest sponsored by the Asociación de Amigos de los Quintero, in which Buero took first prize in the contest for this performance (Doménech, pg. 17). Although this production did not yield any financial gains for the author, the result of the competition did serve to elevate his status as a serious playwright worthy of attention. This was followed by his next major production, *En la ardiente oscuridad* (1950), which solidified his position as an up-and-coming playwright in Spain.

Buero's early success allowed him a degree of flexibility and creativity in selling his works to producers, and as a result over the years he was able to experiment with new and innovative ways of both entertaining his audiences as well as impacting them with his themes. This success, however, did not provide him *carte blanche* to write whatever he wanted, as he was still limited to the constraints of censorship. After the critical acclaim of *En la ardiente oscuridad*, Buero spent most of the 1950's devoting himself to writing dramas that dealt with analyses of the human condition on a general level, for the most part avoiding works that focused inward on the various social problems linked directly to Spain's dictatorial government. The universality of these works and their themes permitted their staging with very few problems from the censors. These works include *La tejedora de sueños* (1952), *La señal que se espera* (1952), *Casi un cuento de hadas* (1953), *Madrugada* (1953), *Irene, o el tesoro* (1954), *Hoy es fiesta* (1956), and *Las*

cartas boca abajo (1957). Stylistically this period was a time of experimentation for Buero, during which he continued to write neo-realistic works (*Madrugada*, *Hoy es fiesta* and *Las cartas boca abajo*), but also explored other vehicles for dramatic representation, including the application of Greek mythology (*La tejedora de sueños*), the fairy tale (*Casi un cuento de hadas*), and the fable (*Irene, o el tesoro*). Thematically these works did not address specific social problems in Spain, but rather delved into a study of the human condition and the various flaws that man possesses, such as jealousy, love, greed and deceit; topics which presented little concern for the censors and account for their minimal reaction to the petitions for the works' productions.

Beginning in 1958 with *Un soñador para un pueblo*, Buero's works became increasingly critical of aspects of society associated with and resulting from the dictatorship. *Un soñador para un pueblo* begins the playwright's transition into a more socially critical theater, taking to issue the Franco regime by focusing on more specific, concrete themes derived from the problems resulting from the dictatorship. As Buero's career advanced through the 1960's and 1970's, the themes of his works became increasingly focused on social problems ranging from human rights and economic exploitation, to war, the judicial system, and the death penalty. Although the scrutiny of the censors increased correspondingly with the increasingly critical tones of these plays, Buero was successful in staging all but one of these dramas without significant change. This one exception, *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, would prove to be the most challenged and controversial work of Buero's career.

As Buero's prominence in the circles of Spanish theater grew, an understanding of this fusion of social criticism with the parameters of Francoist censorship emerged:

posibilismo, or “possibilism”, representing the idea of writing what was possible within the boundaries of what the censors would accept. The term stems from a public debate that took place in 1960 in the theatrical journal *Primer Acto* between Buero and Alfonso Sastre, another leading dramatist of the Franco era. The word *posibilismo* was developed to represent the antithesis of Sastre’s assertion that there was a perceived idea that an *imposibilismo* (“impossibilism”) existed in the Spanish theater under Franco, based in the assumption that there existed certain taboos not to be addressed in works to be submitted to censors of the regime. Since the initial use of these terms in 1960, *posibilismo* and *imposibilismo* have become synonymous with the works of Buero and Sastre, respectively. As the two leading playwrights of their generation, Buero and Sastre redefined the Spanish theater in post-war Spain. The new approaches they introduced to theatrical production and content on the stages of Madrid, as well as their promotion of theater as a genre in Spain through the introduction of foreign theatrical works and their extensive writings and speeches on the theatrical industry, shaped the viewpoints of their peers and established them as leaders in their trade.

The tremendous impact that both Buero and Sastre had on the trajectory of post-war Spanish theater can be measured by the numerous works that have been written about both authors. In many of these works Buero and Sastre are often discussed jointly, not for what they had in common, but rather for the differences that distinguished one from the other. Both authors shared certain core beliefs: a dislike for the social and political situation of Spain under the dictatorship, a disdain for the censorship that inhibited their writing, and a desire to see the theater grow and evolve as an art and as an industry. Beyond these core values, they were philosophical opposites when it came to issues such

as what direction thematic, stylistic and production trends should take, as well as how to approach writing under censorship. This final point is the crux of the comparisons made between Buero and Sastre, given that much of their importance to the canon has evolved from how each confronted social and political topics under the Franco regime and how they each approached the act of writing for the theater under censorship.

In order to better understand Buero's philosophy of *posibilismo* as a means of writing under censorship, it is useful to understand the background of the author that argued against it. Sastre's career started a few years prior to that of Buero's, beginning with his involvement in the "Arte Nuevo" theatrical group in 1945. The "Arte Nuevo" movement was intended to be a rejection of the bourgeois plays being staged in Madrid in the 1940's and to promote a reinvigoration of theatrical form and content. The group based their movement on the idea that theater at that time had declined into a state of popular entertainment devoid of critical content (Ruiz Ramón, pgs. 385-386). It was during this period that Sastre wrote one of his first plays, *Uranio 235*. The work, meant to be a thought-provoking piece about life in the atomic age spawned by the use of the atomic bomb in Japan at the end of World War II, resulted in failure as it provoked laughter in its audience rather than the deep contemplation that Sastre sought (Caudet, pgs. 21-22). Despite its failure to move the audience to consider the potential horror of nuclear war, the work is important as it represented a break with the mundane comedies and historical plays being staged in Spain in the immediate post-war period.

The "Arte Nuevo" movement ultimately disbanded as the various participants followed various tangents in the pursuit of their careers. Sastre's perspective of theater became considerably more radicalized and innovative in the late 1940's, culminating in

his involvement with the Teatro de Agitación Social (TAS). TAS at its core was a movement based on the principles of complete freedom of expression and production with the goal of breaking with the conventions (both political and economic) that dominated the theatrical society of Spain. In 1950, the “Manifiesto del TAS”, co-authored and co-signed by José María del Quinto, was published in the journal “La hora”. In their declaration, Sastre and del Quinto presented their vision of dramatic production, proposing a series of ideas in this new approach to theater outlined in 20 points. For one, social issues addressed in the themes of works should be placed above artistic interests in the creation of scripts. In this assertion he challenged both the thematic intent of theater under dictatorship as well as the economic aspect of the theater industry, suggesting that financial angle of dramatic production often dictated what would be produced. In continuation, the manifesto outlines that the intent of the TAS was to create social agitation, to provoke critical thought by addressing social and political concerns in its themes. Besides supporting the creation of new scripts written by Spanish authors, the manifesto also outlined a list of various foreign works it intended to produce, citing a list of works covering a wide range of topics by authors including Upton Sinclair, Bertolt Brecht, John Steinbeck, Arthur Miller, and Jean-Paul Sartre, all of which were prohibited in Spain at the time that the manifesto was published. The manifesto concluded by calling on both the Dirección General de Teatro as well as theatrical producers to support this movement in the hopes of cultivating a new generation of domestic dramatists (Caudet, pgs. 159-161)³.

³ The Manifiesto del TAS was republished as part of Caudet’s work, and my references to the text come from this reprint.

The manifesto in and of itself was, as Ruiz Ramón refers to it, “...una importante toma de posición, un grito de protesta y de alerta que no cayó en el vacío ni se perdió en el silencio.” (Ruiz Ramón, pg. 387). It was not, however, a viable approach to theater under censorship as the language of the declaration was, in many respects, an open challenge to the regime’s repression of literature and the arts. This manifesto would be the first of many controversial and politically challenging expressions of Sastre’s rebelliousness against the literary and artistic repression of the Franco government. For these reasons the TAS was unsuccessful in seeing its works staged (Martínez-Michel, pg. 58). In the following years Sastre’s provocative positions on theater would begin to have their repercussions. In 1953 he staged the play that would firmly establish his name in the theatrical community of Spain, *Escudra hacia la muerte*. Although the play was considered a critical success, its production was short-lived. When it was initially reviewed by the censors it was deemed acceptable by all of their criteria, but when it was staged it became clear that its content provoked a strong anti-military reaction from the audience, and as a result the production was closed by the censors after three performances (Martínez-Michel, pg. 70). Despite numerous petitions in the following years, the censors did not permit another production of the play, and in 1956 its prohibition is reinforced by the additional opinion of the *Alto Estado Mayor* (Military High Command), condemning the work for its antimilitary sentiment. As a result, it would not be produced commercially again in Spain until 1989 (de Paco, pg. 277)⁴.

⁴ Although a commercial production of the play did not take place during the remaining years of the dictatorship, the play was staged a total of 13 times between 1962 and 1972, all under limited conditions. See Martínez-Michel, pgs. 80-82, for a more detailed account of these performances.

By the mid-1950's, both Buero and Sastre had become established names in the theatrical community of Spain, albeit that each was recognized for very different styles of theater. The two playwrights took different positions on how theater should be written under the constraints imposed on speech in Franco's Spain. In the initial years of Buero's career, he experimented with social themes in a way that he seemed to be testing the waters of what would be accepted by the censors. His early experiences with *Historia de una escalera*, *Palabras en la arena* and *En la ardiente oscuridad* represent the most socially provocative works he produced in the first decade of his career. From these early works he gained insight into how the censors evaluated his texts and, perhaps, insight into how to make his works more palatable to their reception in his subsequent submissions. For this reason the first decade of Buero's theater was only marred by a couple of examples of outright censorship. Sastre, on the other hand, began his career with works that pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable to the censors and progressively became more provocative throughout the first ten years of his career, resulting in a higher degree of prohibition of his works by the censors. As both authors progressed in their careers during the 1950's, the outlook they had of how to approach writing for the theater in Franco's Spain became increasingly divergent. It is around this time that the origins of this philosophical schism that divided Buero and Sastre can be traced. Caudet (42) and de Paco (280) both allude to the fact that the relationship between Buero and Sastre was never a good one, and as a result of both their personal animosity and their distinct points of view about how to approach writing under censorship, the ideological divide between them eventually came to a head. What has come to be called the "Buero-Sastre Polemic" began as a private debate as to what direction theatrical creation should take. This schism

became semi-public during a discussion at a reunion of theatrical directors and playwrights. According to Sastre, Buero criticized some members of the theatrical community for cultivating a theater that was "deliberadamente imposible" (Caudet, pg. 61).

This ideological divide finally entered into the public eye in February 1960, when Alfonso Paso published an article entitled "Los obstáculos para el pacto" in the theatrical journal *Primer Acto*. In this article, Paso manifested that the theatrical community needed to come together to create a "social pact" with the intention of protecting and nurturing young playwrights in order to promote the future of Spanish theater. He proposed in vague terms a compromise with the norms of the Franco regime in order to assure the future of Spanish theater as an industry. Sastre, in the following edition of *Primer Acto*, initiated the public debate about *imposibilismo* by publishing his response to Paso's essay, "Teatro imposible y pacto social". In his article Sastre simultaneously addresses Paso's essay as well as Buero's position that many authors were pursuing an "impossible" theater. He advocated that theatrical creation should not be limited by the constraints of censorship, but rather that the playwright should be independent in his thinking to create dramas of critical social value.

El concepto de "imposibilismo" - y en consecuencia su opuesto - no es válido. No hay un teatro "imposible" en la medida en que no existen criterios de certeza de su imposibilidad. El aparato de control es imprevisible; además las empresas están evolucionando y hoy es normal que estrenan lo que hace unos años rechazaban. Hay eso, sí, un teatro momentáneamente "imposibilitado". Todo teatro debe ser considerado posible hasta que sea imposibilitado; y toda "imposibilitación" debe ser acogida por nosotros como una sorpresa" ("Teatro imposible y pacto social", pg. 2).

Sastre based this definition of *imposibilismo* on the understanding that many playwrights under the dictatorship employed self-censorship in the genesis of their works, working under the premise that to write too freely would result in a work's suppression. He believed that the end result of this presupposition would be a theater that allowed itself to be overly influenced and suppressed by the regime. What Sastre advocated was the absence of self-censorship. His article was inspired by the belief that any theater that did not live up to the standard of being uninhibited and capable of taking on issues of social and political importance in a direct, confrontational manner was deficient, as such self-censorship stemmed from the authors' preconceptions of what the censors would permit. As a result of this belief, he characterized Buero as being conformist for suggesting that a work could be *impossible*, as expression of any and all ideas should be attempted and that the playwright should be at liberty to write and experiment without consideration for what hypothetically *could* be said, rather than automatically assume that their ideas will be censored.

Buero responded to this article in the next edition of *Primer Acto* with his article "Obligada precisión acerca del 'imposibilismo'" in which he explained his theory of theatrical writing. In this article he expressed his regrets for the personalized nature of the criticism leveled against him by Sastre and then explained his arguments as to the invalidity of Sastre's *imposibilista* stance. Buero maintained that all works - including Sastre's - were subject to censorship and revision under the regime if they were to be produced.

Cuando yo critico el "imposibilismo" y recomiendo la posibilitación, no predico acomodaciones; propugno la necesidad de un teatro difícil y resuelto a expresarse con la mayor holgura, pero que no sólo debe escribirse, sino estrenarse. Un teatro,

pues, "en situación" lo más arriesgado posible, pero no temerario. Recomendando, en suma, y a sabiendas de que muchas veces no se logrará, hacer posible un teatro "imposible" ("Obligada precisión acerca del 'imposibilismo'", pg. 4).

Buero agreed in principle that theater needs to have a critical element in order to remain a pertinent genre in society, but he also recognized that the censors had to be taken into account if any play was to live up to its ultimate intention: to be performed before an audience. His argument was for pragmatism in writing, a consciousness of the constraints of censorship, so that theater of quality could be produced in Francoist Spain. He argued that adjustments of texts and plot that might be prohibited under the norms of censorship were necessary in order to conserve theme and critical arguments. For Buero the most essential consideration was not what was written, but what was seen by the public; in other words, his concern was for the overall communication of message, however that may be achieved. He did not make his arguments for the recognition of the limitations of censorship so much as an argument for conformity, but for a realization that there were limitations of what could and could not be said or done, and then finding ways to work around that recognition in order to develop scripts that would conserve theme and message while not crossing the line into prohibited territory.

On a superficial level, the term *posibilismo* has come to be synonymous with "writing within the system". Although this is definitely an aspect of the nature of *posibilismo*, it is by no means a complete definition. Pragmatic recognition of the limitations of what could be said and what could not be said were considered as a starting point for the author. In the creation of his texts Buero admits that he employed a degree of self-censorship in his writing as a result of a conscious recognition of the limitations imposed by the regime. This application of self-censorship is what has been at the core of

the arguments that his “posibilist” approach represents a conformist view of writing under the dictatorship. Restraint in his expression, however, was not a limiting or restricting influence on Buero’s writing, but an obstacle which he viewed as requiring a higher degree of creativity. “A veces autocensurarse no es deformarse, sino buscar comunicación, incluso mejorar un texto,” he said of the phenomena of writing under the constraints of self-censorship (Beneyto, pgs. 22-23). Buero saw the limitations of censorship as a challenge to find alternatives for expressing social criticism in a way that would convey his arguments without crossing into areas expressly prohibited by the regime.

Posibilismo, then, was a method for finding means of communicating themes and ideas to a public that superseded direct confrontation of the topic on a textual level when explicit references were not permitted. When Buero stated that it was necessary to write “en situación”, he referred in part to the need of addressing the situation of censorship. Criticism, if it was going to be achieved, needed to be approached in a way that would not provoke the censors. In order to express critical thought without evoking instant prohibition, Buero wrapped his arguments in situational and symbolic contexts, creating dialog and setting that would indirectly address social arguments of a more universal nature, leaving the audience to draw their own conclusions and make their own associations between the plays and their everyday lives. His dramas were of an associative nature in this respect, planting basic arguments into the minds of his audience that would later be processed and correlated to the specific problems of the viewer’s society. To this end most of his works incorporated an open ending, not offering a clear resolution of the plot’s conflict.

So his audience could draw these parallels between the universal arguments in his plays and the more concrete problems they were meant to confront, Buero used several techniques in the creation of the dialog, circumstances and settings of his plays. Recognizing the limitations of censorship and what could and could not be said explicitly, Buero found innovation in combining dialog with situation or symbol in order to present concepts that on a textual level would not spurn suppression but still communicate the gist of the problems being confronted. His historical dramas presented an opportunity for allegorical associations between events of the past and the social circumstances of the present. Relationships among characters and the portrayal of the treatment of characters often served to underline the dehumanization of man that he criticized in several of his works. Symbols, ranging from the physical limitations he incorporated into many of his characters (blindness, deafness, mental disorders, etc.) to the manipulation of scenery and lighting, affected interpretation in ways that transcended the limitations of censorship.

One of the defining results that Buero's "possibilist" attitude achieved was the success the author had in staging plays regularly. Nearly all of the works submitted to the censors during the era were ultimately approved, although some did require revisions and some cuts in order to gain a green light from the regime. In contrast, Sastre faced much greater challenges with the censors as he found many of his plays to be denied representation as a result of their more aggressive, more confrontational stories. During the course of the dictatorship, Sastre's career was marred by numerous cases of outright prohibition of his works, including some of his now best-known plays such as *Muerte en el barrio* and *Guillermo Tell tiene los ojos tristes*, which did not reach the stage until

many years after they were written. The difficulties he faced in his theatrical career stemmed from the increasingly confrontational themes and tone that his plays took on as his career progressed. Sastre's early work with the Arte Nuevo and the TAS established the foundation for much of his beliefs about the intent and content of theater, both universally as well as in the context of the state of theater in Franco's Spain. In 1960, around the time that the polemic between Buero and himself became public, Sastre and del Quinto founded a new theatrical group, the Grupo de Teatro Realista (GTR), which again proposed a reorganization of how theater should be written and produced. Among the GTR's goals was the promotion of a theater dedicated to promoting social change, an end to censorship, and a reorganization of theatrical representation to give greater control over production to actors and playwrights. The overall success of the GTR was minimal, as it only succeeded in staging three plays, though still a success compared to Sastre and del Quinto's experience with the TAS years earlier (Bryan, pg. 5; Martínez-Michel, pg. 58).

During the course of the 1960's and 1970's Sastre's theater became increasingly prohibited as a result of his uninhibited social criticism. After the censors prohibited *La tragicomedia de la sangre y la ceniza* in 1965 for its overt criticism of the regime, Sastre chose to hold back his future works, opting for self-censorship over the prohibition that the works would ultimately receive (Martínez-Michel, pg. 219). In the final years of the dictatorship, Sastre also confronted legal and political problems, including the imprisonment of his wife in 1974 and later himself for four months as a result of accusations that the couple were involved in the assassination of Franco's Premier and presumed successor, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco (Bryan, pg. ix). Upon his release,

Sastre went into exile in France, and would only return to Spain in 1977, when the transition to democracy following Franco's death was already well under way (de Paco, pgs. 281-282). As a result of these combined factors, many of Sastre's works went unstaged in their time and only found a public either as literature or in the theater in the post-Franco era.

Sastre was prolific, however, in other areas, most notably in the areas of criticism as well as in the publication of his plays. Throughout the years of the dictatorship Sastre continued to write and develop his theories of theatrical representation. In 1956 Sastre saw the publication of his first collection of critical works, Drama y sociedad, which was followed by two other books published during the course of the Franco regime: Anatomía del realismo and La revolución y la crítica de la cultura. Sastre was also able to have most of his plays published, despite being denied permission to have many of them performed as the standards for publishing written texts were considerably more relaxed than the higher degree of scrutiny placed on the performance of public spectacles. Sastre succeeded in publishing twenty out of twenty-six of the plays he wrote between 1946 and 1975, allowing for his works to at least be read by the general public (Martínez-Michel, pg. 212). It was in great part through publication that Sastre succeeded in remaining a major name in the Spanish theater and continued to influence dramatic trends and theory despite the lack of onstage production of his works.

Although Sastre was successful in publishing numerous articles in the area of theory and was able to oversee the production of some of his plays, he remained largely silenced as a playwright under the Franco regime due to the political content of his works, with many of his best dramas never being viewed in Spain during the course of

the dictatorship. As a result of the limitations imposed on Sastre's theater, the social criticism he found so essential to the creation of a new theatre in Spain was never publicly performed as a result of censorship, and only found their way into the public eye in print. Although from an ethical point of view Sastre's assertion that a work should not be considered *imposible* until its presentation could be attempted is correct, the fact is that the result of his more aggressive approach to social theater was the creation of a theater that was largely muted by the censors and could not find a public voice in Spain in its time. Sastre's assertion that *imposibilismo* did not exist and should not be a consideration in writing for the theater would seem to be wrong given his experiences with the censors. His argument that no theater should be considered *imposible* became, for the most part, a moot point, as the censors, and not authors, acted as the gatekeepers of what will be allowed to the stage. The censors in the end were the ones that could and did bar his works and the works of like-minded authors from being performed. The result of Sastre's "imposibilist" stand was that he became a writer who enjoyed a great following of readers that were unable to see his work staged, but because of the manner in which he wrote, the author, as Iglesias Feijóo correctly points out, had to pay the worst price imaginable: to exist in silence (Iglesias Feijóo, pg. 256).

The fact that Buero, in contrast to Sastre, succeeded in performing and publishing nearly all of his plays under the censorship of the Franco regime is a testament to his ability as an author as well as to the merits of *posibilismo*. However, his ability to represent his works as he had originally intended for them to be seen was hindered by the censors. The censors did at times reject certain phrases, actions and, on a few occasions, entire scenes. In most cases, Buero accepted the changes that the censors required in

order to see his works staged, provided they did not detract from the presentation of the themes in his plays or deform the dramatic flow of the plot. His acceptance of these changes was out of pragmatism, as he recognized that some passages could be sacrificed in order to salvage the majority of a drama. For Buero, preserving the themes and social criticism at the heart of his works was paramount, and he accepted the censors' cuts, or *tachaduras*, without debate so long as he did not have to compromise the messages being expressed in his dramas. This rationalization is what distinguished *posibilismo* from conformism, as his acceptance of modifications was contingent on the conservation of theme. This was the case for most of the plays he wrote during the dictatorship, as nearly all the works he wrote were staged without serious difficulty from the regime.

There were obviously limitations to the effectiveness of *posibilismo* as an approach to writing under censorship. Despite Buero's consciousness of the constraints placed on expression, there were cases in which the playwright's pragmatism in approaching censorship were not enough to gain absolute approval. Between 1949 and 1976 Buero wrote a total of 20 different plays, many of which saw great success at the box offices and received critical praise in the theatrical community. Most of these works were produced for the general public, although one, *Mito*, Buero's only attempt at an opera, was never staged commercially for lack of a musical score, and was only staged as a piece for a *teatro de cámara*⁵. Of these plays, only a handful of these works had significant difficulties with the censors, and ultimately of the twenty, three were suppressed at any point in their history. One, *Palabras en la arena*, was originally

approved, only to be later censored for circumstantial reasons. Two other plays, *Aventura en lo gris* and *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, were suppressed at the time of their submission to the censors. These works encountered a greater degree of scrutiny than the rest of Buero's plays, resulting in their prohibition at the time they were submitted for approval. *Aventura en lo gris*, after much revision, did make it to the stage during the Franco era. *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, however, would not be produced in Spain until 1976, two months after Franco's death.

It is the limits of *posibilismo* and the acceptable that this dissertation will explore. At issue are several questions. How did the censors interpret Buero's plays and what criteria did they use to decide what to cut? Why were these passages censored? How did Buero negotiate the limits of censorship, and why did he fail to stage his two prohibited plays? This dissertation will analyze the nature of how the censors evaluated Buero's plays and what exception the censors took with certain parts of Buero's works. Based in large part on documentation of the Ministerio de Información y Turismo, Dirección General de Cinematografía y Teatro conserved in the Archivo General de la Administración del Estado in Alcalá de Henares, Spain, this study will look at the suppressions and censorship of Buero's plays in part from the censors' point of view. From study of these documents, a greater understanding as to how the censors approached Buero's works and ultimately what was at issue in the suppression of certain passages and plays can be achieved. In its entirety, the process of censorship ultimately

⁵ *Mito*'s only known staging during the Franco dictatorship was solicited by the Colegio Mayor José Antonio. In the file on *Mito* (File Box C85238, E 97/69) a petition dated March 12, 1969 by the Federación Española T.U. is included, as well as a final dictamen permitting the play's performance.

depended upon the human element, as the censors, in order to arrive at a decision about whether to permit or prohibit a play, were forced to make subjective determinations as to whether a word, line, passage, or entire work violated any of the restrictions placed on speech under the regime. In the end, personal interpretations and aesthetic reception played a significant role in determining the fate of a theatrical work.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation will examine the theory and practice of theatrical censorship in Spain during the Franco era. It has been said by many (including Buero) that the nature of the censorial apparatus was highly subjective and arbitrary. Although norms were created to govern the definition of the acceptable and the unacceptable, many of the parameters that existed were vague and extremely open to interpretation. The documentation and previous study of censorship, as we will see, shows that a great degree of subjectivity did exist in how the censors approached a work and made decisions as to whether elements of the work were allowable or not. The sometimes arbitrary nature of the censorial process stems from the human equation of the bureaucracy, as judgments made of the works submitted to the censors were ultimately made by individual readers, whose political beliefs and personal interpretations of the texts they reviewed meshed with their interpretations of the laws governing what was acceptable in a theatrical performance. The ways in which the censors eventually received these works given the guidelines under which they operated would ultimately determine whether a drama was destined for performance or prohibition.

Chapter 3 will focus on works that Buero successfully staged during the years of the dictatorship. Despite the censors' vigilance, Buero was successful in staging the vast majority of his works and yet being able to include into these dramas socially critical

themes. His success in large part came not from what the message of the play was, but how it was presented. In this chapter we will explore the structure and themes of his works and examine how he was able to approach topics which, when confronted directly, would have been considered taboo. With these elements in mind we will then examine the censors' interpretations of Buero's works in order to understand their reception to Buero's plays and to better comprehend the nature of the revisions that they required in order to make the play presentable. Through the documentation at the Archivo General de la Administración Civil, containing numerous reports and summaries of Buero's plays, we will gain insight into how the censors interpreted his works as well as what problems they had with certain phrases and situations presented in these works.

Chapter 4 will look at the cases of three plays, *Aventura en lo gris*, *Palabras en la arena*, and *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, which were suppressed at some point in their histories, each for different reasons. At issue with these plays was an uncertainty on the part of the censors as to how these plays would be received. In the case of *Aventura en lo gris* concerns were expressed as to the nature of certain "experimental" scenes as well as the use of specific language and uncertain production status. In the case of *Palabras en la arena*, only a specific production was prohibited because of the timing of the production – the Holy Week prior to Easter – due to the religious aspects of the play. At question was how the public would interpret the arguments of the work in the context of Easter festivities and the appropriateness of the play's reinterpretation of a biblical scene. In the cases of both plays censorship occurred as the result of concerns over how both of these plays would be received by the public and whether they were morally appropriate. *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, as we will see, was censored for its

political content. Although this drama was written in 1964, it wasn't until 1976 that the play saw its debut in Spain, and even in the months prior to its first production in Madrid the play's status was still uncertain. In this section we will outline the history of the play as it went through numerous petitions for its production and the various problems that the play faced with the censors. What we will see is that the difficulties the play had with censorship came in many ways from the fact that Buero broke with his formula of *posibilismo* and created a play that was much more confrontational in the presentation of its theme - the use of political torture - and that the author in the case of this particular work was far less willing to compromise with the censors than in other circumstances during the dictatorship.

Chapter 2: The censors and their procedures

The influence of censorship on literature during the rule of the Franco regime forced authors to re-evaluate how they addressed the profession of writing. It was necessary for writers to find ways to work within the parameters of what was deemed acceptable by the dictatorship. Of all the genres, theatrical works were especially affected by censorship given that they were not only literary texts but also performance pieces. As a result of this additional consideration, scripts were more closely scrutinized for content and more susceptible to suppression. The rationale for the greater vigilance of theater is due to the medium's potential for influencing public opinion by impacting an audience not only through dialog but also through visual and aural effects. This level of scrutiny left a very strong mark on both the themes and quality of theater written during the dictatorship. Although many authors were successful in publishing their works, or in the case of theater, of producing them, despite censorship, the nature of many of these works sidestepped political and social issues that would have incurred the red ink of the censor. For those that wanted their works to reflect the realities of post-war Spain in any way contrary to the government's point of view, the constraints of censorship represented a severe barrier to intellectual and creative exploration, forcing a re-thinking of how to approach literary production.

Posibilismo represented one of the approaches conceived in order to insure literary creation while mitigating the restrictions placed on expression. The existence of this philosophy pre-supposed a set of limitations imposed by the regime on expression, and

then was intended to find innovative ways to circumvent these limitations in the presentation of a work's message. Despite the extraordinary success that he achieved during the Franco era, Buero Vallejo was not immune to the power of the censors nor was he naïve to their restrictions. All of the works he saw performed under the dictatorship had to be submitted to the censors for approval prior to their staging. In his elaboration of the manuscripts, Buero was extremely conscious of the influence that the censors extended over theater, pragmatically recognizing that his efforts would go up in smoke if he were to present a work containing overly provocative vocabulary or images. The fact that he was for the most part successful in winning the approval of the censors shows that he indeed understood the limitations on expression sufficiently enough to be able to write numerous plays that, after some revisions imposed by the censors, were ultimately performable. In order to achieve this success it was necessary for Buero to determine what the potential points of contention would be in the arguments and language of his scripts when they were turned over to the censors to review. This was a pre-condition to the employment of *posibilismo* as an approach to writing under the dictatorship since being able to anticipate how the censors would react to a text was necessary to a work receiving permission for production.

Although he was very successful in gaining approval for his works, Buero was certainly not a fan of the censors' interference in the performance of his works. In certain articles that he penned, Buero addressed the institution of censorship publicly, albeit in very generic terms that avoided offending the government. One rather humorous example of his criticism of the censorial apparatus is a short essay he published in 1955 entitled "Don Homobono", which satirized the nature of censorship (O.C. II, pgs. 603-606). This

essay, really more of a short story, depicts a young playwright who shows his work to Don Homobono, an older, distinguished gentleman with a penchant for literary criticism. The playwright, constantly concerned about the feedback that he will receive from his mentor, admits in the narration that he arrives to their café meetings with multiple arguments and ideas in mind in anticipation that many of his thoughts will be struck down by Don Homobono. One day, the writer arrives to one of their meetings with the intent of creating a simple play. He introduces the first character, a pharmacist, which Don Homobono rejects, as he believes pharmacists are too prone to complaining, and demands that the dramatist change the character. The writer then describes a young couple in love. Don Homobono asks if they kiss. Out of fear, the playwright lies and says no, but does state that they hold hands. Don Homobono, furious that such an act would even be conceived, orders the author to lower his voice for fear the topic would provoke a scandal if their conversation was overheard by the other patrons and demands he cut out that scene. The playwright outlines the remainder of the plot of his work and at every turn his ideas are greeted with reactions of disgust and rejection. Even the final line of the fictional play, meant by the playwright to have a moral intent, meets with rejection: "Todos envejeceremos, Ramón. También tú peinarás canas un día. Pero tu conciencia no podrá blanquearse." Don Homobono rejects even this seemingly innocent line, reminding the writer that the president of an imaginary friendly government is named Ramón and has gray hair, and therefore the ending must be cut for fear of making an allusion to the president. In the end the author admits to Don Homobono the fear he has of sharing his work with him as nothing he seems to do pleases his mentor. He then reminds Don Homobono that even the classic work La Celestina, a piece of literature far more

provocative than his own, was approved by the Inquisition. The older man rejects the notion that the content of La Celestina was publishable, despite that it is a documented fact that the work was allowed by the Inquisition. Don Homobono then angrily leaves, telling his protégée on his way out the door that he would never be free of his criticism no matter how much the author dislikes his advice. The story ends with the playwright contemplating a drama about his encounter with Don Homobono, and then realizing that his critic would not like that story either.

This rather humorous story serves as a window into Buero's opinions about the constraints of censorship. Although Buero developed the theme of his story with a tone of absurdity, the fear and evasion that his fictional dramatist demonstrated were representative of the circumstances under which authors functioned under the Franco dictatorship. Everything, even the most innocent and seemingly acceptable phrases and circumstances, could potentially come under the scrutiny of the censors if contextualized in a way that presented a message with negative overtones towards the regime, its allies, or its moral or political ideologies. Ultimately, nothing was safe from suppression, as the decisions as to what was and was not allowable was not made by the author, but by the readers assigned to review a work.

Censorship, or as it was euphemistically called during the Franco era, *la consulta previa* (prior consultation), was the law of the land. The development of censorship as both a concept and an institution was laid out by laws and decrees that were occasionally updated and modified during the 36 years that Franco reigned. The phenomenon of political and moral control over literary and artistic production was obviously not a new concept in Spain. Repression of information and thought had existed on and off on the

Iberian Peninsula for centuries prior to the rise of Nationalist Spain in the late 1930's. Explicit governmental censorship can be traced back to the age of Ferdinand and Isabella of Castile when the Inquisition was introduced to Spain in the late fifteenth century. The monarchs were the first to introduce law providing for the censorship of printed materials by signing a royal decree on July 8, 1502, which provided for the review of all papers and books intended for publishing. This decree was unique as it did not make distinctions between ecclesiastic and civil law, and brought the jurisdiction of literary repression under the auspices of the Crown by delegating the responsibility to the Royal Council (Sierra Corella, pg. 78). Even masterpieces such as Don Quixote or La Celestina were subject to censorship. The monarchy, in consultation with representatives of the Church, held ultimate authority as to what could be publicly expressed in print. In the case of Don Quixote, Cervantes, aware of the dangers of provoking the Inquisition, cloaked much of his social commentary through the use of puns, plays on words, and situation to allude to many of the ills he saw in society in his time. In the elaboration of his texts he approached social criticism in his works with a conscious awareness of the limitations that the Inquisition imposed on expression of thought contrary to Catholic doctrine or the crown. The result of the Inquisition's influence on Cervantes was the creation of a novel in which symbol, allegory, and situational contexts were used to cloak many of his criticisms in an ambiguity that allowed for their approval by the Church. To this end, Cervantes can be looked at as the first to conceive of *posibilismo* on some rudimentary level as an approach to writing.

Like Cervantes, Buero wrote with an awareness of the limitations and subjectivity of censorship. His understanding of the phenomena is evident in many of his works given

the caution he took in expressing his ideas in an innocuous way. It is safe to assume that Buero was conscious on some level of what was permissible and what was taboo, despite the fact that the laws governing censorship did not explicitly state these norms in such a way that they were clearly defined for the authors, or for that matter even the reading censor. When asked in a survey about his opinion of theatrical censorship, Buero succinctly summarized the problems with the norms of censorship: "Creo que se le puede objetar, ante todo, la vaguedad de sus normas, que permite aprobar, pero también prohibir, casi cualquier cosa, y las desigualdades de criterio que ello ha comportado en la práctica" (O.C. II, pg. 462). Buero's view of censorship was ultimately that of a system that was highly arbitrary, in which the interpretation and reaction of the censor as an individual was the only true standard. The readers, although working inside a certain framework of thought based in law and policy, were ultimately left to make subjective judgments as to meaning, intent and interpretations of a work under review. *Posibilismo*, as a working philosophy for producing theater under the dictatorship, was dependent on an understanding of what the regime and its legal code would allow and what it would prohibit, as well as an anticipation of how the reading censor would interpret the contents of the text in question. In order to understand the conditions under which Buero wrote, and even more so to understand the difficulties he and other authors faced with the censors, it is necessary to understand the actual criteria and process that the censors employed in the review of theatrical works.

Censorship under the Franco regime was instituted in Spain before the Civil War had even ended. The first steps toward a national code of literary restriction were made during the Civil War through a series of military policies. The first was an order in late

1936 prohibiting materials deemed pornographic, although in reality this was extended to include literature and publications espousing ideologies that conflicted with the Nationalists (Ribo Durán, pg. 117). Other military orders were issued during the war, eventually resulting in the proclamation of the *Ley de Prensa del 22 de abril de 1938*, which was applied to Nationalist-occupied territories immediately and expanded to the whole of Spain upon the final defeat of the Republican forces the following year. The law, part of the overall military legal code established by the Nationalists, provided a general framework for the regime's control of the press, literature, and art. This *Ley de Prensa* was in theory only a temporary act designed for use during a time of war, to be replaced by a more comprehensive law at a later time. Rather than create a new law, however, the initial decree was left standing after the end of the Civil War and simply expanded and modified to meet the needs of the regime. Much of the original language was left in effect for many years – 28 to be exact – until it was replaced by a new law in 1966 (Cisquella, et. al., pg. 19).

The administration of censorship changed hands at least twice during the first decade of the regime. The 1938 statute provided for all censorial activities to be administered under the Ministry of the Interior. In 1942 the activity of theatrical censorship was reassigned to the Departamento de Teatro de la Delegación Nacional de Propoganda, an office of the Vicesecretaría de Educación Popular in the Ministry of Education, where it remained until 1951 (Cisquella, et. al., pg. 23). During the years that the duties of policing theater fell under the umbrella of this organization, the foundations for the process of theatrical censorship were established, although specific guidelines for what was permissible or prohibited were not clearly documented. What evolved during these

first years was a bureaucracy that was charged with the review of all literary works, including theater, as well as a process. However, the standards for what was to be censored were not outlined explicitly, with the censors only given the charge to root out any works that attacked the regime, the Church, or public morality. For lack of criteria the nature of censorship in the early years of the Franco dictatorship was overly-repressive and highly subjective.

This did not change when the direction of literary censorship changed hands again in 1951, when responsibility for this work was transferred to the newly created Ministry of Information and Tourism (MIT). This MIT was in theory created to develop and promote tourism in Spain and act as an official voice of the government at a time when Spain was emerging from the international isolation it incurred as a result of the regime's alignment with the Axis during World War II. In practice though, the majority of the duties placed on the MIT were those of controlling information being published or broadcasted in Spain, as well as to control information coming into and leaving Spain. Under the leadership of its first Minister, Gabriel Arias Salgado, the MIT continued the task of reviewing press coverage and literary works as before, with censorship being applied for the purpose of controlling information and silencing dissenting voices within the nation. Arias Salgado, who was previously in charge of censorship when its administration was overseen by the Ministry of Education, advocated and carried out a strong and repressive control over all of the mediums of communications in the earlier years of the dictatorship.

Although the *Ley de Prensa de 1938* provided for an apparatus to oversee literary and artistic production under the regime, it did not elaborate guidelines for what was to be prohibited. The criteria for what was censorable were not expressly laid out in the laws

governing censorship. As a result, the censors were left to their personal judgments as to whether a word, phrase, scene, or even entire work presented an element that went against the principles of the regime. In the context of controlling information, this was to Arias Salgado's advantage as it allowed him and his department a greater degree of latitude under which they could suppress any text, film, or theatrical work considered even remotely disagreeable to the regime. To have established clearer guidelines as to the application of censorship would have tied Arias Salgado's hands to an extent, and it was likely for this reason that meaningful reform did not come about under his administration.

The ambiguity and arbitrary nature of the process led to great frustration in Spain's theatrical community, with calls for the end of censorship, or, as a bare minimum, a clarification of the criteria so authors could at least understand the system. Much of the impetus for clearer standards came as a result of a letter written around 1960 addressed to Arías Salgado signed by some 100 intellectuals, including Buero Vallejo, in which the signatories expressed concerns about the subjective and unclear nature of the process of censorship (Caudet, pg. 60). The letter was to go ignored during the remainder of Arías Salgado's tenure as minister of the MIT. It would not be until 1963, after Arias Salgado was replaced by Manuel Fraga as the Minister of Information and Tourism, that a codified set of rules was clearly outlined. Shortly after assuming the position of Minister of the MIT, Fraga announced publicly that one of his first actions would be to begin a reform of the censorial apparatus (Bernáldez, pg. 52). In making this announcement, Fraga indirectly addressed their concerns expressed by Spanish authors as well as editors of the press by codifying the process on paper and requiring the censors to cite motives for suppressing a work. Several different laws were to be presented to the government

over the next few years, cumulating in the passing of the *Ley de Prensa de 1966*, governing the press.

Fraga, in addressing the concerns of writers in Spain, attempted to make changes to appease the authors while at the same time maintain an element of control over what was being produced. Among the reforms he instituted was a set of guidelines for the vigilance of the theater. In 1963 a code for theatrical censorship, the *Normas sobre calificación de obras teatrales*, was introduced, establishing a series of rules for what was, or rather, not, permitted in the presentation of a theatrical work. These norms duplicated the same rules used for the censorship of film, as both mediums were intended for public performance before mass audiences and made use of visual and aural resources to impact their audiences. The various norms were very diverse in nature, ranging from issues of moral and religious aspects of the work to issues of political concerns. Listed in 19 points, many of them with subcategories, the criteria outlined the approach for how the censor should approach a work⁶.

The first of these guidelines stressed that each work should be judged not only on the presentation of individual scenes or events, but in how the totality of the work is addressed:

Cada [obra] se deberá juzgar, no solo en sus imágenes o escenas singulares, sino de modo unitario, en relación con la totalidad de su contenido y según las características de los distintos géneros y estilos [teatrales]. Si una [obra], en su conjunto, se considera gravemente peligrosa, será prohibida antes que autorizarla

⁶ A full text of the *Normas sobre calificación de obras teatrales* can be found in Luciano Garcia Lorenzo's book *Documentos sobre el teatro español contemporáneo*, pgs. 231-234, cited in the bibliography of this dissertation.

con alteraciones o supresiones que la modifiquen de manera substancial⁷ (Garcia Lorenzo, pg. 231).

Essentially what this suggests is that if the censor felt that if the overall content of the work was inappropriate, despite the lack of specific censorable elements as outlined in the code, the work could be censored until modifications were made to address the problematic qualities of the play. What is not explained clearly was what constituted a “gravamente peligrosa” work. Although in their totality all of the subsequent guidelines served to define to some extent what was and was not allowable, this all-encompassing standard was ultimately left open to interpretation, leaving the *vocales* to use their own judgment as to whether the work was in conflict with the government’s positions and/or moral values. This statement ultimately established that the decision to permit or prohibit a work was to be made on the basis of its overall aspect, in cases that individual scenes and events that were by themselves permissible merged to form a total argument that represented an attack on the morals and policies of the regime.

The next six guidelines dealt with the overall presentation of good versus evil and the incorporation of social problems. While the presentation of evil was permissible in post-war theater under Franco, the way in which it was manifested on stage had limitations. For one, the use of evil had to be contextually relevant to the work, and acts of evil could never be shown as being justifiable or desirable. The ultimate value of the incorporation of sin was to be for the point of conflict in the work, with good triumphing over evil in

⁷ As the *Normas* were written originally for film, the original language was conserved and not changed to reflect its application to the genre for theater. The changes in brackets are mine, added only to clarify the language of the text.

the end, although this did not need to be expressed explicitly in the work⁸. Within these guidelines, instructions were given as to how to treat the presentation of conflict and morally questionable characters, stating that marginal characters could be introduced, provided that they adhered to all of the norms expressed. Essentially, this meant that antagonists could be created exhibiting negative, even evil, qualities, as long as the climax of the drama produced a downfall of such characters and the moral flaws that they demonstrated. This also held true for theme, as authentic social and moral issues were allowed to be addressed, as long as they conformed to all of the standards set out in the guidelines. Norm 7 explicitly states that “[n]o hay razón para prohibir un [teatro]⁹ que se limite a plantear problemas auténticos, aunque no los dé plena solución, con tal que no prejuzgue una conclusión inaceptable según estas Normas” (pg. 232). Although this statement would seem to allow for the treatment of any and all topics as themes in dramatic works, the statement was couched inside the confines of the other norms presented, placing limitations on the seemingly liberal interpretation that this statement would suggest. In the end, the themes presented in approved theatrical works were in reality severely limited by the subsequent norms and much of what was supposedly allowed by the wording of this norm was negated when all of the norms in their totality were applied to the review of a work.

⁸ Norms 4 and 5 explain how evil should be treated in the work, although they are to some extent contradictory. Norm 4 states that the work should proceed to a conclusion reproaching evil and exemplifying good conduct, although this reproach need not be explicit. Norm 5 furthers this, saying such a rapprochement of bad conduct cannot be assured by a simple condemnation of the event or marginally or accidentally resolved. Also stated is that repentance on the part of the transgressor is not necessarily required. The overall goal for the work is that good and evil are presented in balance when in conflict, with good winning in the end.

With the generic establishment of how a work should be structured in its overall arguments and presentation of plot, the norms for censorship that followed elaborated a more specific list of issues and images that were expressly forbidden. These remaining elements, not presented in the *Normas* in the most coherent of order, can be summarized as centering around four general premises for what was censorable:

1. Suppression of values in conflict with the teachings of the Catholic faith.
2. Suppression of ideas relating to sexuality, bad moral or ethical conduct.
3. Suppression of offensive or blasphemous language or imagery.
4. Suppression of language critical of or in contrary to the government, its policies, and its officials.

Norm 8 of the list, broken into five parts, addressed certain sins as defined by Catholic doctrine. This norm explicitly banned language and action justifying suicide, willful murder, revenge, divorce, adultery, prostitution, and abortion. The phrasing of these provisions employed the term justification, meaning that these actions were never to be presented as acceptable. In the context of the previous statements examining the representation of good and evil, this does suggest that there was some leeway in the incorporation of these elements if their end was to develop an antagonist and develop the character's downfall.

With the exceptions of murder and revenge, these issues did not appear commonly in scripts submitted to the censors during the dictatorship. However, the murder of characters, particularly antagonists, was common, with some of these deaths being

⁹ The guideline as written used the word *cine*. As the same guidelines were applied to theater, some of the text from the original guidelines written for the censorship of film was erroneously duplicated. The word

attributed to revenge. The murder of an antagonist, as far back as Greek tragedies, is a recurring event in theater and was often at the core of achieving catharsis in a work.

Although by the twentieth century many playwrights did not necessarily adhere to Aristotelian principles in the elaboration of their scripts, the use of murder to bring about a just ending was still very common in theater.

This then raises the question of how such resolutions were presentable in the context of the guidelines. The treatment of the murder of characters in Franco-era theater was one area where we see the distinctions of Alfonso Sastre's "imposibilism" and Buero's "posibilist" approach. Sastre applied the use of murder as a means to achieve catharsis in a direct manner with its presentation resulting in the justification of homicide in the development of the work's resolution. In one example, *Muerte en el barrio*, Sastre presented such resolution through the murder of the doctor, guilty of letting a young neighborhood boy die in the hospital while he was out drinking, by the entire community. Although the negligence and culpability of the character was established firmly in the work and his death creates a sense of catharsis, the willfulness of the action was brought into question by the censors and the work was ultimately prohibited for this reason. The censors were especially concerned with the presentation of the citizens of the neighborhood taking justice into their own hands in the absence of swift and definitive punishment by the authorities. The nature of the work's resolution led to significant debate among the censors. In a report dated December 2, 1955, the Director General outlines the censors' concern for the play's ending¹⁰. The primary arguments for the

teatro in brackets represents my correction of the terminology.

¹⁰ Report by Director General in file C 71687 E 298/55 dated December 2, 1955.

drama's approval were made on the basis that classic works of the Siglo de Oro, among which was specifically mentioned Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna*, projected similar messages and outcomes and were by no means represented a political threat to the regime. The counter-arguments made for the prohibition of the play stemmed from both Sastre's political background as well as the distinctions of the terms under which the murder was committed when compared to Lope's tyrannical villain. One of the censors, Adolfo Carril, distinguished in his report the use of public uprising in the two works by outlining the circumstances behind the two murders. In *Fuenteovejuna*, the public did rise up, but their actions were later sanctioned and approved by the king, on whose part the villagers were ultimately acting. In the case of *Muerte en el barrio*, the residents were acting out of revenge, without the sanction of the government. Furthermore, although the general opinion of the people was that the government could not provide a fit punishment for the doctor's negligence, the play itself did not completely negate the possibility of a civilized punishment for the doctor's crime¹¹.

In contrast, Buero hedged the use of murder as a tool for resolution in the circumstances of his plots. In some cases, such as in *Aventura en lo gris* or *El concierto de San Ovidio*, Buero allowed his protagonists to kill their adversaries, only for those protagonists to later face the consequences of their crimes (in the former, by execution by soldiers of an invading army, in the latter by imprisonment). In other cases, such as in *El tragaluz*, murder was justified by the insanity of the father, who was a schizophrenic. In such cases where murder could be explained away by either punishment of the person

¹¹ Report by Adolfo Carril in file C 71687 E 298/55 dated November 25, 1955

who committed the act or by some other reasonable justification, it seems the censors did not have a problem with its incorporation and presentation in a dramatic work.

The application of murder and revenge appears to have been flexible, as long as the act itself is not presented as an act that the audience should wish to emulate or arouse rebellious tendencies among the spectators. The more curious aspect of the censors' reaction to homicide can be found in their reaction to Sastre's *Muerte en el barrio*. What Carril seemed to suggest in his interpretation was that murder was justified in Lope's drama because it was the will of the sovereign, while in Sastre's play it was the will of the community acting outside of the bounds of the government. Although Carril did not go so far as to say so, he suggested that murder as a punishment for a crime was completely acceptable, provided it was administered by the authorities or with their express permission. Justice, it seems, was only to be put in the hands of the State, and nowhere else.

One of the distinguishing differences between Buero and Sastre in their approach to the incorporation of murder was in the way it was staged in their works. The censors perhaps looked more favorably on the use of murder as a means of achieving catharsis when it was presented indirectly. Buero, following in the tradition of the ancient Greek theater, did not overtly show the death of his characters onstage. Like the Greeks, Buero set the scene for the death of his antagonists and, at the pivotal moment in the play, the scene would end, leaving the *implied* murder to the imaginations of the public. This, combined with the protagonist's punishment for his actions, made the inclusion of such scenes possible. Sastre, on the other hand, was more direct in presenting homicide as tool

for dramatic resolution, with the deaths of his antagonists sometimes presented more overtly and lacking in a clear punishment for those who killed.

Beyond moral concerns expressly condemned by the Catholic Church, other aspects of personal conduct seen as negative by the regime were also subject to suppression. Norms 9 through 13 prohibited the performance of additional behavior, banning the presentation of drug and alcohol abuse as being anything besides reprehensible, the presentation of crime in an excessive manner, imagery of brutality or cruelty to people or animals, and colloquial expressions or obscene gestures that are not in good taste. Also laced inside these guidelines was the development of one of the issues more frequently examined by the censors – sexuality. Banned from presentation in the theater were acts of sexual perversion, both as a primary theme as well as a secondary aspect of the work. Beyond perversion, intimacy, in all its forms, was to be scrutinized, with all scenes presenting “offensive” imagery to be suppressed. The phrasing of the primary language surrounding this provision, which prohibited images and scenes that could “provocar bajas pasiones en el espectador normal” was, like so many other terms used in the *Normas*, open to interpretation and could be extended to include any romantic situation considered too provocative by the censors (Garcia Lorenzo, pg. 232).

What exactly constituted a scene too provocative for public representation was left to the judgment of the censor’s personal interpretation, creating a wide spectrum of reactions depending upon how strictly the reader chose to adhere to the spirit of the norms. An example of the over-zealous application of this norm can be found in the censors’ review of Buero’s 1969 play *Llegada de los dioses*. In a stage note depicting a conversation between Julio and his girlfriend Veronica, the censors took issue with the

description of the positioning of Verónica on the sofa, in which Buero elaborated the character as being “reclinada en el sofá con las [piernas entreabiertas, Veronica muestra la laxitud posterior a la entrega amorosa] (brackets are those of the censors). It should be added that this description was the limit of the exposition given to the scene described by Buero and that no further amorous description was provided. At issue for the censors was the positioning of Verónica’s body in the visual presentation of the scene. Although the language suggested a provocative positioning of the character on the sofa, the overall scene was not presented in a way that could be considered graphic, as the end result of the scene would have been that the audience would have seen her bare legs. The exposure of Verónica’s legs, however, was from the censors’ point of view sufficient motive to call for the stage note to be removed from the play’s production¹².

Norms 14 through 17 represented a more encompassing restriction of social thought. The three parts of Norm 14 prohibited a vast series of concepts related to the overall nature of the Church and the State. The first of these three provisions called for the suppression of language and action disrespectful to religious beliefs and practices. The second, 14,2, banned criticism in the presentation of political ideologies or attacks against institutions or ceremonies of importance to the government. This provision is worthy of special attention, as the text of this norm was found repeatedly in reports relating to theatrical works containing a social or political character. The text of this norm states

¹² Whether this cut was ultimately made and enforced in the 1969 production of *Llegada de los dioses* is unclear, as the file on the play (C 87864 E 687-78) is incomplete. The censors’ reports were missing from this file, so their explanations and justifications are unfortunately lost to us. The citation of the scene in question came from the original manuscripts submitted to the censors, which are contained in the file, with the suggested cuts marked in red pencil. The stagename, however, does appear in subsequent publications of the play.

La presentación denigrante o indigna de ideologías políticas y todo lo que atente de alguna manera contra instituciones o ceremonias, que el recto orden exige sean tratadas respetuosamente. En cuanto a la presentación de los personajes, ha de quedar suficientemente clara para los espectadores la distinción entre la conducta de los personajes y lo que representan” (García Lorenzo, pg. 233).

The language of this norm, very generalized and vague, provided a great degree of latitude for the censors to render a prohibitive judgment of a work. The phrase “presentación denigrante o indigna de ideologías políticas y todo lo que atente de alguna manera contra instituciones o ceremonias...” in and of itself did not specify the institutions or ceremonies for which the norm applied. Given the undefined nature of the language of the guideline, the individual censor was left to decide what constituted a “denigrante o indigna” political argument, as well as to which institutions or ceremonies such criticisms could and could not be extended. An open-ended interpretation of the first half of this provision could be, and ultimately was, applied to any language critical of the regime or its policies. In the end the language was extended to suppress any concept reflecting negatively on Franco’s government and society as determined by the censors¹³.

The next three norms served to extend the provisions of the three parts of Norm 14. Norm 15 prohibited the confrontation among populations, races, and social classes or the presentation of social divisions with the intent of promoting social or moral discord (Garcia Lorenzo, pg. 233). The language of this norm was intended to deal with the negation of any arguments dealing with social unrest among a community, and perhaps also to mute anti-war demonstrations. The first of these interpretations was extended to

¹³ The norm in question was explicitly mentioned more than once in the reports submitted by the censors when reviewing Buero’s *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*. The open-ended language of the norm made it an out for the censors in cases where they were at a loss to censor a work under more specific criteria. The application of the provision in relation to this drama will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

silence any demonstration of public protests, obviously something a dictatorial society would wish its people not to witness. This second interpretation is plausible given that Norm 16 prohibits theatrical works promoting themes that promote arguments against the defense of the State. These two norms appear to have been directed towards protecting the image of the military and its actions. Given the army's direct role in the Civil War, the post-war role of Spain in the Cold War as a member of NATO, and Spain's military involvement in Africa, the regime no doubt wished to add language to the Norms that would negate criticism of the military and the policy makers responsible for taking action.

The next norm furthered the protection of the government and the institutions of Spain. This rule, in three parts, served as an all-encompassing rule that furthered the provisions of Norm 14 and clarified some specific elements of what was off limits. The provision states:

Se prohibirá cuanto atente de alguna manera contra:

1° La Iglesia católica, su dogma, su moral y su culto.

2° Los principios fundamentales de del Estado, la dignidad nacional y la seguridad interior o exterior del país.

3° La persona del Jefe del Estado. (Garcia Lorenzo, pg. 233)

Once again, the three points of Norm 17 were specific enough to eliminate specific against the Church, the State, and Franco himself, but yet were worded in such a way that their interpretations could be extended to cover a multitude of topics. What constituted an attack against the dogma or morals of the Church served to cover a large variety of topics, as did concepts falling under the category of the principles of the State.

The final two norms essentially gave closure to the long list already presented. Norm 18 provided for the suppression of works that, in their entirety, presented graphic, brutal,

or disgusting imagery. Once again, the fundamental moral principles of the regime were reflected in its desire to protect the public from the vulgar. Norm 19 underlined all of the previous norms in cases that a work was to be presented for children. The language of this norm was intended mostly as a reminder to the censors to be extra vigilant in reviewing any work that minors would see, as the regime wished to protect the young from images or dialog that could corrupt their innocence in any way. Incorporated into this final norm was an emphasis on the prohibition of any quality that could be perceived as pornographic or blasphemous.

The modifications implemented under Fraga represented an attempt to standardize the process of censorship and provide clearer criteria. Although the code did establish a set of criteria of what was prohibited, the language of the overall code was left open to interpretation to the extent that many of the norms could be extended to include virtually any idea or text that the censors found objectionable. Buero's argument criticizing the vagueness of the censors' criteria and the application of how those criteria were applied seemed to be well founded when one looks at the overall list of the norms under which the censors operated. The list of what was permissible and what was prohibited in the presentation of a theatrical piece was both contradictory and confusing when examined in its entirety. Theoretically all thematic issues were considered acceptable provided they did not come into conflict with the specific prohibitions outlined in the list of norms. This list, however, prohibited a wide array of topics, including any negative depiction of the government and its policies and personnel, as well as a wide range of moral issues seen as undesirable by the regime.

In its entirety the code ultimately neutralized the direct treatment of many of the themes that theater, both past and present, has served to address. Criticism directly taking on the social and political problems of post-war Spain was muted, as was criticism of all of the personal issues that came into conflict with the conservative ethos of the regime. In short, anything deemed conflictive with the beliefs that the dictatorship wished to promote, or perhaps, instill, in its population was off limits. The end result of these guidelines was a code that on some levels was very specific as to what was prohibitory and on others so vague that the guidelines could be manipulated to justify the suppression of any work that the *vocales* found questionable or offensive.

The language of these norms was designed specifically to be flexible enough so that they could encompass any need that the censors could face when reviewing a work. It was no accident that the phrasing of certain norms was left open to interpretation and could be manipulated to suppress virtually anything, no matter how seemingly trivial, that the censors might object to. The contradictory nature of the law's wording, intended to project the image of a "liberalization" of censorship without creating a real liberalization, stemmed from Franco's own views and opinions about how censorship should be reformed. Shortly after Fraga announced to the press his intent to reform the nature of censorship, he was warned by José Ibáñez Martín, Spain's ambassador to Portugal, that he should be cautious in making such changes and not pursue such changes without Franco's support (Bernáldez, pg. 53). Soon after the press announcement Fraga consulted with Franco as to the elaboration of a new *Ley de Prensa*. Paul Preston, in his extensive and detailed biography of Franco, characterizes the Caudillo's reaction to the notion of reforms to censorship as apprehensive. Franco let Fraga know that he was skeptical of

liberalization of the media and literary expression, directing Fraga to elaborate a law that would protect against attacks on the primary taboo topics, namely issues associated with the Church and the regime. Franco also stipulated that editors and publishers were to be held responsible for what they publish. For him, censorship was to continue, albeit in a modified, codified, and seemingly liberalized law. Franco ultimately called the shots as to the final word of how censorship was to continue under his government, with reform being as minimal and non-threatening to the social order as possible. To this end he told Fraga “[l]et us not be too good natured. Like everyone else, let us use indirect means of control” (Preston, pg. 723).

As a result of Franco’s input, the *Normas* were elaborated in such a way that the prohibition of language directly in conflict with the regime’s moral and political ideology was expressly banned, while at the same time providing additional language that left the censors free to suppress anything that fell through the cracks of the explicit prohibitions. Despite the evolution of the rules governing censorship resulting from the reforms made by Fraga, the changes were ultimately superficial and did not eliminate the subjective nature of literary repression. Fraga, despite his supposed good intents of liberalizing the censorial process by promoting reformed policies for theater disseminated in 1963 and the eventual passing of the *Ley de Prensa de 1966*, only, as Jeroen Oskam puts it, “ajust[ó] la doctrina de censura al nuevo estilo modernizante, tecnocrático-desarrollista y “minipluralista” del regimen, dejando intacta su eficacia práctica” (Oskam, pg. 114). In the eyes of those in the government the reforms brought about by Fraga were seen as very liberal for their time and the source of debate. It goes without saying that Franco’s opinions on how reforms should have been undertaken weighed heavily on the drafting of

the new norms. The end result was a set of norms that on some levels seemed more liberal, although they allowed for the continuation of the system as before.

The changes made to the process during Fraga's ministry in the end served two primary functions. The first was to silence the critics complaining of the arbitrary nature of the censors. By passing the *Normas sobre calificación de obras teatrales* Fraga had succeeded in neutralizing the argument that the censors operated under only a subjective approach to their scrutiny of the texts submitted for review. The second function was, as Oskam pointed out, to modernize the system in a way that corresponded to the overall reforms made by the technocrats in the 1960's. By codifying the norms of censorship into a clearer, more direct set of guidelines, he gave the process of greater degree of uniformity.

Despite the intention of the norms to give the process an the appearance of having a more objective nature, censorship still remained a subjective practice given that the decisions to approve or deny the production of a work was still in the hands of individual readers. What was deemed acceptable and unacceptable was ultimately an issue of personal judgment since each reader approached a script with his own interpretation of the Norms. The censors were left to apply their own interpretations of the guidelines and use their own devices to filter out any content they considered inappropriate, leading to cases where what might have been approved of by one censor would be rejected by another. The censor's approach would be influenced by a myriad of personal factors, including their political beliefs, their religious piousness, and their own sensibilities as to what was offensive, unpatriotic, or subversive. The human equation of censorship held the potential for many different reactions to a text, meaning that a work's approval was

the result of not appeasing just one reader, but all of the *vocales* that would review a work.

The means of censoring theater was not solely limited to the issuing of the norms of what was prohibited. The process under which the works were reviewed was also integral to the overall process. Armed with these guidelines, the censors were given the task of filtering the content the public was to witness. The process of submitting works to the censors began with the submission of a standardized form petitioning for a production. In the petition were listed the title of the play, the names of the playwright, director, producer, actors, and stage crew taking part in the staging of the work, and the addresses of all of these people. Also submitted on this form were the location and dates of the production. Two copies of the script were also turned in with the petition, both of which needed to be certified to be considered official.

The use of this initial petition had a dual role. First, it enabled the censors to know who would be involved with the production of a work, as individuals who had questionable histories with the censors could be scrutinized. That the playwright and the content of the play would be put under a magnifying glass goes without question, but also directors and producers whose political beliefs were either in conflict with the regime or simply unknown to the censors were also examined. Scrutiny of those sponsoring a play did occur, especially in cases where the submitted script was of a controversial nature. In one case pertaining to Buero's work, *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, the censors went to the length of issuing a report of a director/producer, Juan Calot, bringing into question whether the submission with his name attached should be approved. The letter in question gave a brief biography of his theatrical productions in the two years prior to the

submission. The overall tone of the letter was one that seemed to be probing for a motivation to rule against his petition, as the drama he submitted for production was for several reasons very troubling for the censors¹⁴.

The requirement of this petition also created an indirect censorship on the part of theatrical producers, as they were required to make financial commitments without knowing with certainty at the time they submitted the petition that the work they wished to stage would be approved. Producers had additional considerations to take into account such as reserving a theater and perhaps, contracting actors in advance, *prior* to the work's approval¹⁵. In consequence, producers and directors were less willing to run the risk of committing themselves to an endeavor that could be potentially result in financial loss for them if it were cancelled due to lack of authorization from the government. The risk factor that resulted from this process ultimately led to the rejection of many works by

¹⁴ The letter in question, dated February 24, 1967, was included among the file relating to *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*. A brief biography of Calot was issued among the compilation of tachaduras saying the following:

“Juan Calot tuvo una Agencia teatral con Luis Hurtado que fundaron con el nombre de HURCA. Luego se separaron amistosamente, según ha dicho el mismo Hurtado.

Debió ser en la temporada 1965, fué empresario del Teatro Principal de Valencia, en donde hizo una buena campaña, por lo menos creemos que acceptable.

En el año 1966, se hizo empresario de los teatros Pérez Galdós y el Guimerá, de Canarias, pero de esta campaña sabemos poco.

Ahora es empresario de la Compañía CYC, con la que no tenemos noticia - si actuó en provincias, aunque tiene pedida una subvención a nombre de la misma y bien pudiera ser que la formara para pedir esta subvención.

Lo más viable sería hacer la gestión por medio de Luis Hurtado, ya que Hurtado es un hombre de confianza, serio y con muy buenas relaciones y trato con la Dirección General y en el mundo del teatro. Juan Calot también le conocemos, pero no ofrece esta garantía que ofrece Hurtado, si bien haciendo la salvedad de que en el mundo del teatro las garantías son siempre relativas y están en relación directa con el negocio y el éxito de una determinada obra.”

¹⁵ Sometimes the contracting of actors was provisional, and no payment was made until approval of the play was received from the Junta de Teatro. The consequence of this process was that actors, although agreeing to perform in the production, did not begin rehearsals until after approval was issued. Given that the dates agreed to had to in the petition were fixed, the amount of rehearsal time that the actors would have before the opening night was limited to the amount of time between receipt of authorization for production

producers unwilling to take a chance on a work that could potentially be denied. This financial burden was compounded by the passing of the *Ley de Prensa de 1966*. Although in theory the law made prior review of a work by the censors optional, one of the provisions of Fraga's law was to hold publishers (and by extension, theatrical producers) financially liable for the presentation of material that deviated from the accepted norms of censorship. The wording of the laws and policies modifying censorship achieved Franco's desire to make the process more indirect, as a greater share of the responsibility for judging works was passed to publishers and producers, resulting in a form of economic censorship grounded in instilling fear in the entrepreneurs backing a work.

Once the required materials had been rendered to the Junta de Teatro, the process for the examination of the work would begin. First, three different *vocales*, or readers, would review the work and prepare a report using a standardized form. After stating basic information such as title, author, the censor's name, etc., a series of questions was posed about the work. The first was for a brief description of the plot of the work, the "Breve exposición del argumento". For the most part these tended to be objective synopses of the work not containing any critical comments. At the end of this section the censor was asked to offer an overall summary of the thesis of the work, usually in a few sentences.

The next section, entitled "Valor puramente literario", was where the criticism of the work began to be developed. Here the censor offered a critique the work presented to him, expressing his own impressions of the text. Given the ambiguous nature of the title of this part of the form (as no definition of how to evaluate something as subjective as a

and the established opening night. As the schedule of the censors was often precarious, this often left a cast with very little time to rehearse, ultimately affecting the quality of the performance.

work's literary value was offered in the *Normas*), this section ultimately provided the censor an opportunity to express what he thought of the work as a whole. This section of the report offers a window into how the censor as an individual reader felt about the work, as the personality of the censor emerged as he explained his personal opinions about the play text being reviewed. In some cases when the work was not provocative, the censor limited himself to a few brief sentences critiquing the aesthetic qualities of the work or commenting on how the play's theme was developed and presented. In cases of works that caught the reader's attention, this section sometimes offered the censor space to gush about the beauty and originality of a wonderful work, or deplore and chastise a work he found offensive or badly written.

Following the analysis of the literary quality of the play, the next aspect of the play to be examined is the "Valor teatral" (Theatrical Value) of the script. In this, the censor examined a few different aspects. One was an overall interpretation of how the work would be visually represented if staged, taking into account how dialog would be combined with elements such as staging, lighting, action, and other physical attributes of a theatrical work as described in the stage notes. The censor also was able to amplify his comments of the aesthetic reception of the work in this portion of the report and, in some cases, even go to the extreme of speculating whether the public would find this work appealing. This final aspect is probably the most interesting, as in making such judgments the censor transcended his place as an evaluator of language and content and stepped into the role of drama critic, rendering subjective comments above and beyond the criteria assigned to him.

The remainder of the report asked additional questions of the work's structure and content. Two sections, the "Matiz político" and the "Matiz religioso" represented two of the more important aspects of the report, as it was here that the censor would summarize the political and religious themes expounded in the work, specifically examining concepts that clashed with the ideological orthodoxy of the regime. In these sections any problems that might have existed with the content of the play were noted, usually for the purpose of compiling the list of changes and suppressions that would follow. This overall judgment of the work was made in the following section, "Juicio General que merece al Censor", in which the elements of the previous sections are merged into a comprehensive report, in which the opinion of the censor as to whether the work should be approved for production, revised, or suppressed was issued.

The next step of the process depended on the results of the reports of the three *vocales*. If all three censors were in agreement that the work was permissible, then the evaluations were passed on to the Head of the Theatrical Section, who, barring circumstances that might have obliged him to act in contrary with the recommendations of the three *vocales*, approved the work and sent his authorization to his superior, the Director General, who countersigned the authorization of the work, which was then sent to the petitioning director. The same process held true if all three censors recommended the prohibition of a work, with the end result being the announcement to the director of the work's suppression.

It is when the three reviewing censors did not agree that the process became more complex. In the event of disagreement among the *vocales*, a work would pass to the full *pleno*, or committee. The number of censors that comprised the *pleno* evolved over the

course of time, growing from seven in the early years of the dictatorship to as many as fifteen different readers by 1975¹⁶. In cases requiring the judgments of this group, each reader would review the work in question and issue a report outlining all of the criteria previously mentioned. After all of the members had submitted their reviews, the committee would meet and discuss the work in question. Among the issues discussed would be the work's overall permissibility and the formation of a consensus about what cuts (if any) should be required for the work to be approved. The decision to approve or deny a work was then made by a majority vote, and in cases of approval, the decision over the terms under which a work would be presented were issued in the *dictamen final*. The committee's ruling was then passed on to the section chief, who would then decide if the committee's recommendation should be validated or not. As a matter of practice the committee's judgment was normally followed, although on occasion the section chief could and would deny permission for the staging of a work when he felt circumstances warranted a prohibitory response.

An affirmative *dictamen final* was not the end of the process. Once the play was given a green light by the censors, there was still one last hurdle that remained in order for the work to be seen by the general public, the *visado del ensayo general*, or the official seal of approval. This entailed the actual viewing of a work by an official of the MIT in order to ensure that the approved script was followed and that physical elements of the play, such as staging, lighting and scenery conformed to what the censors had reviewed. This official viewing was necessary so that the government could be assured

¹⁶ In the 1975 review of *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, the work was taken to the full committee which was comprised of 15 readers.

that all of the changes they outlined to a text were put into place, and that the actual production was not modified in a way that would conflict the guidelines of the MIT. It was also a way to observe how the general public received a work and to see whether or not the drama provoked an undesirable response from the audience. Although most works usually received approval and were allowed to be performed without interference, occasionally a production was shut down as a result of a negative review by the attending censor¹⁷.

From the censors' point of view, the norms codified by Fraga in 1963 did place certain limitations on the ability to censor works. Rather than deciding whether a work was permissible or prohibited based solely on personal interpretation, the censors were after the implementation of the *Normas* responsible for justifying the reasons that a work should be censored. For authors the requirement of such justification might have represented some improvement, but given the sometimes arbitrary nature of the norms and the subjective process of reviewing theatrical works, it was only a small victory given that the norms were open to interpretation that could be extended to suppress whatever content the censors objected to. However, in certain cases the censors'

¹⁷ The official responsible for the *visado del ensayo general* was empowered, when necessary, to close a production. One such example of a work that was shut down as a result of a negative review was Sastre's *Escuadra hacia la muerte*, which was cancelled after only 3 performances in 1953 as a result of how the military was presented as well as the staging of the Cabo's execution. The play was originally approved by the censors and received a favorable *dictamen final* because the censors had interpreted the message of the play as being pro-military for its condemnation of the soldier for their crimes. When the work was staged, the audience response to the work was one of sympathy for the soldiers, resulting in an anti-military interpretation. It is for this reason it was consequently censored. See T. Avril Byron's Censorship and Social Conflict in the Spanish Theater, pg. 2 for details.

The official observing the play was also influenced certain other aspects of the theatrical production, including the times that a work could be performed. In the file concerning *El concierto de San Ovidio*, was a note outlining an experience between the play's producer, José Osuna and the official in question. Apparently a letter of reprimand was sent to Osuna after a hostile argument between himself and the

judgment came into conflict with the norms. There were times that they encountered a work that was approvable according to their own standards, but in its entirety contained aspects that were troubling to the point that they believed that the text should be suppressed. But even with the flexibility offered in the wording of the norms, the censors were bound to certain restrictions.

As a result of this occasional quandary, a *de facto* form of censorship emerged, *el silencio administrativo*, or administrative silence. Administrative silence was nothing less than simply not rendering a judgment of a work, leaving the work to exist in limbo with neither permission nor prohibition of the work being given. Without express permission for a play's production being offered, the censors only had to wait until the production dates cited in the petition for performance to run out, at which time the petition became void. The application of administrative silence became a tool that was useful to the censors as it had a dual effect. The first was to give them a way to get around their own rules in cases when a work was questionable despite being technically acceptable. The second is that it furthered the cause of indirect censorship, as producers would want to avoid backing plays that they may never see an opening night. Although administrative silence never became a common manner of silencing works containing language and imagery going against the ideology of the regime, it was, nonetheless, a notable alternative to formal censorship in special cases, affecting, by Manual Abellán's account, anywhere from 0.7-5.5% of works submitted for approval annually in the years after the implementation of the *Normas* (Abellán, pg 153). Furthermore, the percentage of works

official. At issue was the time that the play should be performed at. The official suggested 6:30 pm, while Osuna preferred a later hour for financial reasons as the later time would be favorable to turnout.

that suffered from administrative silence between 1963 and the end of the dictatorship actually increased, primarily under Fraga's successors between 1969 and 1975¹⁸. The increase suggests that the application of the norms to the censorial process did result in the limitation of the censors' ability to directly prohibit works that they did not favor, although the use of this method was at times politically motivated when the regime wished to avoid the embarrassment of prohibiting a work by a renowned author.

Censorship, despite the changes implemented on paper, was not transformed significantly as a result of Fraga's program for reform, as decision-making was still left in the hands of the same censors and their function to read, analyze, and judge the acceptability of a work was not altered. Although the process took the guise of a more liberalized system of review as a result of Fraga's changes, censorship more or less continued after 1963 in the same way it did during the earlier years of the dictatorship. Ultimately the review of theatrical works during the 36 years that Franco held power was controlled by a small group of individuals that decided what was appropriate for public consumption. The rules and regulations that they worked with were flexible to the point that limiting any expression they saw as conflicting with the regime could be justified, and when their rules weren't sufficient to silence the voices of criticism, extra-legal means such as administrative silence were applied. The system that evolved was able to manipulate the industry in such a way that they created economic incentives for producers to turn down works that would not be approved, eliminating the need for a

¹⁸ Abellán, in his extensive analysis of the phenomenon of censorship, tabulated the number of works which were subject to administrative silence. The 0.7-5.5% of works subjected to administrative silence is Abellán's tabulation of the percentage of works that suffered administrative silence during the administrations of three ministers of the MIT: Fraga (0.7%), Sánchez Bella (3.6%) and Pio Cabanillas (5.5%). See Abellán, pg 153 for a more detailed account.

review of all of the works written, as the financial risks were too great to take a chance on works espousing qualities that would be repressed. It is in the context of this governmental control that Buero emerged as Spain's leading playwright, using *posibilismo* as an approach to writing at the margins of the acceptable. In the next chapter we will look at how the censors interpreted the works that they ultimately approved, as well as what changes Buero was required to make to his scripts in order to bring them to the Spanish stage.

Chapter 3: The structural and thematic elements of *posibilismo* and the censors' reactions

With censorship ever-present and ever-vigilant during the Franco dictatorship, Buero Vallejo was required to be extremely creative if he wished to present theatrical works capable of both taking on social and political issues and still winning the approval of the *vocales* charged with the duty of ferreting out works that challenged the ethos of the regime and keeping them from the public eye. In order to achieve both of these objectives, Buero had to walk a tightrope in the elaboration of his plays. If he said too little, he risked having the social arguments incorporated into his works lost or watered down. If he framed any political or social argument in a manner that was too confrontational, he risked having his works suppressed. *Posibilismo* represented the balance between these two extremes. His approach to writing under censorship was one of developing texts that would be considered acceptable for performance under the guidelines set out by the MIT (or his suppositions of the guidelines, as he almost certainly did not know precisely what they were) when possible, and when these constraints proved limiting, the author found creative ways to present his arguments working outside the margins of the norms.

In the overall canon of his work, Buero used many different vehicles to achieve this circumvention of the norms of censorship, in many cases going beyond the use of text to present his thoughts by instilling his works with symbolism, visual and aural qualities designed to trigger audience response, or allegories to present themes that could not be directly addressed through dialog. Through the application of such devices, he

developed many of his scripts in such a way that he did not actively express his arguments directly, but rather alluded to the underlying themes of his dramas indirectly. His intent was to project a broad, universal message that would transmit the basic crux of his social criticism to the audience so that after the play ended they would reflect upon what they had seen and draw their own conclusions. Buero aspired not so much to convince the audience of something, but rather to spark their contemplation. By developing his scripts along these lines, he was able to develop story lines that sidestepped the prohibitive by addressing core topics without entering into how these topics specifically applied themselves to Spain under the Franco dictatorship. As an approach to writing under censorship, *posibilismo* was successful primarily for this reason, as Buero kept the nature of his social criticism limited to an acceptable, global dimension that did nothing to provoke a negative response from the censors. He succeeded in writing, and more importantly, staging his works by being able to write on the margin of the censors' norms and assert his basic ideas to the public, albeit in ways that may not have addressed his themes as directly as he might otherwise have chosen.

Posibilismo does not seem to have been intended as a way to fool the censors, nor was it necessarily intended to try to create a subliminal message. The primary goal of this approach to writing was to permit the creation and production of theater capable of taking on topics critical of society's problems within the framework of what was allowed under the dictatorship. Buero's first priority in the exposition of his social commentary was to make his arguments as visible as possible to the audience in order to provoke their later consideration of the underlying themes, while avoiding language or imagery that would prove too provocative and result in the play's suppression. The indirect manner in which

he presented social commentary allowed for his works to gain the approval of the censors as he sidestepped the prohibitory criteria of the censors by not directly entering into territory that was deemed taboo under the norms laid out by the MIT. This involved having an understanding of the censors' laundry list of topics forbidden by the regime. Prior to Manuel Fraga's tenure as head of the MIT, there was no established list of norms under which the censors operated, making it difficult to know precisely where the boundary between the acceptable and the prohibited lay. Upon implementation of Fraga's guidelines, a more established code of conduct was put into use, but it is unclear whether the *Normas sobre calificación de obras teatrales* discussed in the previous chapter were available and immediately known to playwrights of the era as there is no evidence that they were published¹⁹. The relatively minimal conflict that Buero faced with gaining acceptance for most of his works suggests that he had enough of an understanding of the censors' criteria to know when to steer away from developing text that was too inflammatory. The fact that the censors challenged certain terms and scenes, however, shows that Buero's comprehension of where to draw the line were not crystal clear. The general complaints that he and other playwrights echoed of an ambiguous and highly subjective system would support the argument that the censors' criteria were not known to the theatrical community beyond a general understanding of the ideologies behind the

¹⁹ The *Normas sobre calificación de obras teatrales* appear to have been an internal document only. A copy of these *Normas* was included in the MIT's file on Buero's play *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*. Since the end of the Franco era these documents were brought to light in Garcia Lorenzo's compilation of theatrical documents that were cited in Chapter 2 of this study. The fact that a copy of this document could not be found in the Biblioteca Nacional de España suggests that the *Normas* were never intended to be made available to authors as a source of reference, as there was no publication of these norms in any of the relevant laws that were openly disseminated. That, combined with the numerous statements made by authors of the era of the vague and arbitrary nature of censorship overall leads to the conclusion that the *Normas* were not available to Buero.

regime and knowing enough not to present anything that directly conflicted with those ideologies.

Despite the indirect presentation of the themes in many of Buero's plays, the censors, in reviewing Buero's works, were vigilant and were by no means oblivious or ignorant to the messages that the playwright projected. The application of the criteria which they applied in their judgments of the scripts submitted to them, as well as the personal interpretations of the texts that the censors made as they read the texts, overall show that the censors did thoroughly analyze the plays submitted and were trained to look for hidden messages, symbols, allegories, and other aspects of theatrical pieces that might escape the casual reader. Prior to Fraga's reforms of the guidelines for censorship, the reviewing censors operated under their own discretion, with only a loose framework of criteria to work with. Upon their implementation in 1963, the *Normas* discussed in the previous chapter served as a primer for how they should approach the task of evaluating a theatrical piece, essentially formalizing the process that already existed. With these guidelines in hand, the censors scrutinized the works presented to them, primarily searching for language or imagery that was in conflict with the policies of the regime in relation to political and moral conduct. The language of the norms Fraga established, however, did contain vague provisions that did ultimately allow for the arbitrary suppression of works if, in their entirety, projected messages that took the regime or morality to extremes unacceptable to the government. The open-ended nature of the censors' guidelines meant that Buero had to be sure that his messages were not too confrontational in order to ensure receipt of the censors' approval.

During the first 25 years of his career while writing under censorship, Buero employed a divergent range of themes and techniques intended to bring his plays to life on the stage. Although he incorporated a wide range of themes and stylistic tools in his plays, there were at the same time certain elements that were common to most of his works. One of the common denominators of all of his works was his concern for man and the society in which he lives. As early as his arrival in Spain's theatrical circles in 1949, with the staging of his debut work *Historia de una escalera*, Buero demonstrated his social conscious in the creation of his scripts. *Historia de una escalera* has been applauded as one of Buero's master works, as well as one of the works that redefined theater in the post-war period in Spain. Many of these accolades stem from Buero's willingness to take on topics related to the human condition, even in cases where discussion of such topics could be hindered by the limitations placed on authors by the government.

Historia de una escalera, like all of Buero's subsequent works, was grounded in the idea of change, be it personal change or a change of society as a whole. The plots of his works focus on protagonists in confrontation with forces that hindered their abilities to grow beyond the limits that society imposed on them. In the case of *Historia de una escalera*, the protagonists found themselves locked into a vicious circle that they alone had the ability to break, provided they found it within themselves to take their own fates into their hands and affect change. To this end, the theme of this work is one of empowerment, with the presentation of history repeating itself intended to underline the potential for failure if the protagonists did not choose to break the cycle and take charge of their own destinies.

Historia de una escalera was not for the most part a politically charged play. The themes of social stagnation and the existential question of pursuing one's dreams to their conclusion versus the acceptance of social and personal stagnation are universal and not limited to the reality of post-war Spain. However, certain phrases of the text were scrutinized for their moral and political message, leading to some revisions to the text before it would be staged. Nearly all of the cuts the censors required fell into two categories. The first category was the use of some mildly offensive language. The censors objected to the use of certain terms such as "zorra" and "chulo" as they felt these words were inappropriate and derogatory. In the file pertaining to *Historia de una escalera*, the manuscript submitted to the censors shows revisions to the text that eliminated these inflammatory terms. These changes were few and slight in the context of the work in its totality. Although such terms did appear in the manuscript a few times, they were few and far between. In fact, the absence of an excessive presence of vulgar terms apparently impressed one censor, leading him to praise the work in his report for its restraint in the use of foul language²⁰.

The majority of the cuts initially called for by the censors were motivated by a few phrases that did have subtle political overtones. One term that appeared in the manuscript and was challenged by the censors is the word "señorito". The use of this word, according to Patricia O'Connor, was cited as an unacceptable term as a result of its popularity among Republican sympathizers, who used it as a derogatory term to refer to

²⁰ Report by Emilio Morales de Acevedo dated October 10, 1949 in file C 71.418 (83/51) N. 433-49. In his report Acevedo de Morales commented "Es prodigio de observación y de verdad que lleva al autor a no querer prescindir de adjetivos vulgares para dar más fuerza y color a la obra". In his report he overall applauds the work, although it is his report on the work that led to nearly all of the suppressions cited in the manuscript.

the idle rich of Spain in the 1930s (O'Connor, pg. 283). Apparently in their scrutiny the censors wished to eliminate all reference, however small, that could build a correlation between a character and anti-Nationalist sentiment. In the final draft of the text, the term was cut. Additional references were made to certain utterances on the part of Urbano and Fernando relating to the former's involvement in a labor union. The inclusion of Urbano's membership in organized labor is at the center of nearly all of the concerns the censors cited in their review of *Historia de una escalera*. The deletion of these phrases seems to stem from the regime's desire to distance Urbano's affiliation with organized labor from his inclusion in a politically radical union such as the socialist UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores) or the more radical, anarcho-syndicalist CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo), both of which were outlawed by the dictatorship and replaced by a vertically-oriented labor movement administered and monitored by the regime.

The various words and phrases that the censors objected to did not significantly influence the development of the plot of the play nor have an impact on the overall elaboration of the theme. As a result, Buero had no difficulty in compromising with the censors and omitted the objectionable language. His willingness to do this is an important aspect of *posibilismo*. The primary concern Buero had was for the conservation of plot and theme when the work was staged. Provided that the content and theme of the play was not significantly influenced by changes to the text, he was willing to accept alterations to words and phrases. He recognized the need for a degree of compromise with the censors if his works were to be performed. It was this willingness to make changes that Sastre criticized when he stated that *posibilismo* represented a conformist approach to writing under the dictatorship. The modifications that Buero made to his

texts, however, were not in the end conformist, as they were usually few and did not detract from the play's overall impact on the audience. By adhering to the desires of the censors to replace these phrases, he assured that the play would reach the stage and ultimately be allowed to communicate the messages that the themes of the works were intended to project.

The level of censorship that Buero encountered in the case of *Historia de una escalera* was representative of the level of cuts (*tachaduras*) noted in the 16 other plays that the censors approved outright between 1949 and 1975. The cuts that they signaled in the plays presented for their review normally resulted in the rephrasing of specific words and sentences to avoid foul language or references that could have subtle political overtones. Profanities were obviously forbidden, and the elimination of such language only resulted in either the omission of these words or their replacement with less offensive terms that conserved the theatrical tension of the work. Phrases and words that had political consequence were principally limited to the context of the situations of the scene and often were omitted or changed as well. Occasionally staging was an issue, such as in the example of the censors' objection to the provocative way Verónica was seated in *Llegada de los dioses* that was mentioned in Chapter 2. The *Normas* of the censors expressed what could and could not be shown to the public, although they were often open to interpretation and the level of cuts they called for suggest they erred on the side of caution in determining how strict they wished to be in cutting out language that could even remotely be attributed to their laundry list of prohibitions.

Another defining quality of Buero's theater was the incorporation of the open ending. In many of his works, Buero developed conclusions that left aspects of the plot

unresolved so that the public would be left to draw their own conclusions. By not providing a definitive conclusion to his plays, Buero was able to leave elements of the play's interpretation to the spectator's judgment, allowing him or her to ponder what resolution would likely have evolved had the play continued beyond the final scene. Besides the contemplation that this sort of conclusion stimulated, the open ending also allowed Buero to implicitly incorporate critical thought into his works that might have proven difficult to present more explicitly due to censorship. Rather than provide an ending that might have been subject to censorship, Buero circumvented a potentially provocative conclusion by leaving the ending unresolved and allowing the audience to draw their own conclusions as to what path the fate of the characters would take. This characteristic of *posibilismo* was a useful instrument because it allowed for a psychological impact on the audience that transcended the boundaries of censorship. As the audience processed the totality of everything they saw on stage and the messages behind the images and dialog, they would hopefully draw the same conclusions that Buero was attempting to indirectly express to them.

In the case of *Historia de una escalera*, the open ending gave the work an existential quality. By leaving the audience to speculate as to whether the fates of Fernando, *hijo* and Carmina, *hija* would follow the same paths as their parents, or whether they would rise from the decadence and misery of their circumstances and pursue the dreams they envision, Buero left the conclusion of the play open to multiple possibilities. Perhaps the characters were doomed to repeat the mistakes of their parents and spend their lives going up and down the same symbolic stairs their parents spent their lives on, or perhaps they would realize their dreams and escape a hopeless fate. The work

was designed with the intent of not providing a resolution, since Buero wished for his audience to not be offered a final, definitive ending, but rather to ponder the play's outcome for themselves after they left the theater. His hope was that, in their contemplation of the events they witnessed, the spectator would begin to question the nature of their own lives and ask him or herself "does this represent my life on some level?". Buero's intention was not to ferment public dissent, but rather personal dissent, by planting the idea that one needs to pursue change in order to have change.

The open ending was designed not only to provoke thought, but also instill a degree of hope into the resolutions of his plays, even when the protagonists meet their downfalls. Halsey (pgs. 29-32), Bejel (pgs. 36-37) and Cortina (pgs. 21-22) have all commented on the uniqueness of how the conclusions of Buero's works leave the audience with a sense of optimism for the future despite the tragic outcome of the play, resulting in a *teatro de esperanza*. Buero rationalized the duality of tragedy and hope in his works by suggesting that hope is the key to achieving catharsis. In his words, hope

[o]frece, eso sí, una doble vertiente clara: la esperanza en la justificación metafísica del mundo y la esperanza en la solución terrenal de los dolores humanos. Por una de las dos vertientes suele orientarse la tragedia y, en ocasiones, por las dos al mismo tiempo; buen indicio de que su aparente disparidad y hasta su eventual condición de enemigas se apoyan tal vez en identidades profundas. Sea como sea, la esperanza las unifica, y es cualidad siempre positiva que confirma la función positiva de la tragedia (O.C. II, pg. 648).

The role of hope ultimately acted as a counterbalance to the presentation of tragic events, serving to give definition to the tragic events on stage as well as becoming the focus of the work's conclusion that provided the audience with catharsis. It is this ray of light offered to the public that ultimately served to underline the play's outcome in such a way that would provoke further contemplation of the character's downfall.

Historia de una escalera was unique in that the ending was developed in such way that it took on a dual interpretation. One interpretation allows for the possibility that the children of the protagonists would repeat the mistakes of their parents by not pursuing their dreams and remaining, trapped, on the “stairs”. This interpretation provokes the existential question of whether the children were ultimately doomed to lead the lives of their parents, with the cycle continuing on into the future, as one censor put it, “hasta que quiera Dios”²¹. The second interpretation leaves us with the hope that the younger generation would learn from the mistakes of their elders and break the cycle. To this end the resolution could be seen as either completely tragic or holding the possibility for future hope, depending on the point of view of the spectator. Despite the tragedy that potentially looms for the younger generation, an element of hope is left to them at the end of the play, and it is this hope that Buero uses to project one of his most universal themes: that we as a society have the power to change.

In many of Buero’s plays, the element of hope developed in the open ending was more concretely developed and presented, although only resulting after a tragic event. The protagonists succumbed to a downfall such as death, imprisonment, or some other form of defeat, but from these events were sown the seeds for a hope for change. In Buero’s second major production, *En la ardiente oscuridad*²², we see that the blind antagonist Carlos, having murdered the visionary Ignacio, came to “see” the truth about Ignacio’s recognition of the false reality behind the school’s *moral de acero* only after

²¹ Report by Emilio Morales de Acevedo in File C 71.418 (83/51), N. 433-49 on *Historia de una escalera*.

²² Although *En la ardiente oscuridad* was Buero’s second major stage production performed for a mass audience, it was actually his third staged work. In 1949 his one-act play *Palabras en la arena* was staged for a limited audience. In Chapter 4 the details of *Palabras en la arena* will be discussed.

Doña Pepita tells him that she witnessed the murder. When he realizes that Doña Pepita's vision allowed her to see a crime that no other person in the school was able to see, Ignacio's arguments are proven correct, breaking his belief that blindness did not limit his perception of the world in any way. As a result, Carlos takes up Ignacio's dream and becomes the continuing voice of hope for the future. In the case of *El concierto de San Ovidio*, hope is instilled through the inclusion of the academic Valentin Haüy. In the closing monolog of the play, he informs the audience that the protagonist David, having murdered Valindin for his abuse of the blind characters of the play, was imprisoned. David's idealism for the blind to play music as well as sighted musicians inspired Haüy to devote the rest of his life to helping the blind lead better lives so they would not have to suffer the exploitation of men such as Valindin. In both of these cases an element of hope for the future is created despite the downfall of the lead characters, projecting hope for a better future to the audience. The incorporation of such resolutions in Buero's works was intended to plant ideas in the minds of his public to provoke their consideration rather than directly represent a scene that projected a closed, established ending. To this end much of the social criticism he projected in these endings was associative, as the spectator was left to process what he or she saw on stage and to make his or her own connections to what was presented and how it was relevant to their reality after they left the playhouse.

The open endings of his works were, in the early years of Buero's career, an almost unheard of way to conclude a play. Although the nature of the unresolved conclusions of his play did provide catharsis for the audience to the extent that people left the theater having experienced a dramatic event and finding resolution to the emotional

experience provoked by the drama, the achievement of catharsis was dependant upon how each person internalized the content and theme of the play. The censors, unaccustomed to reading plays that did not have an established ending, seemed unsure of how to interpret a work that did not define the terms of the resolution of the plot. In his review of *En la ardiente oscuridad*, one of the censors, Gumersindo Montes Agudo, suggested that the open ending of the play was nothing more than a stylistic flaw, commenting "...el autor no toma un definido campo: expone y no sugiere conclusiones. Este es un defecto al considerar la obra como un experimento literario sin concluir, pero, en cambio, la resta toda posible peligrosidad moral"²³. Although this represents the opinion of only one censor (and the only opinion ever expressed by the censors in writing related to Buero's use of open endings in his plays), Montes Agudo's comments do suggest that Buero's application of an unresolved conclusion to his works did not fall into the rubric of what was prohibited by the censors. From a moral standpoint, the play does not project an ending that condones Ignacio's murder, since Carlos is confronted by Doña Pepita, and is forced to live with the knowledge of his crime, moving him to ultimately take on the role of visionary that is left vacant by Ignacio's demise.

The open ending, despite Montes Agudo's opinion of its detracton from the quality of the work, was considered an acceptable mechanism for ending a play. Buero

²³ Report by G. Montes Agudo in File C71.423 (E 473-50) dated November 19, 1950. It is worth noting that Montes's criticism of the open ending as being a flaw in the structure of *En la ardiente oscuridad* is one of several criticisms that he expressed about the play. The overall tone of the rest of his report establishes clearly that his overall reaction to the play was lackluster at best, characterizing the drama as having "una acusada pretensión intelectualista" and being "una fría exposición dialéctica de un problema intimista, sin auténtica emoción". His personal opinion of the quality of the play, however, was not a factor in rendering a decision about its permissibility to be staged. To this end, despite his personal reaction to the play, he found it ideologically acceptable and approved the script for performance.

was able to exploit this lack of a clearly defined ending by leaving elements of the play's resolution to the imagination of the audience, provoking their consideration of the social and moral implications of what they witnessed. By ending his works in such a way, he was able to leave elements of social criticism unspoken and opt for their implicit transmission if the plot of the play could direct the audience to arrive at a conclusion. As a result, what Buero might have been otherwise unable to express directly in the text of his works could still be transmitted on an extra-textual level to the public by simply moving them along the path to arriving at a general, unspoken conclusion.

One important aspect of Buero's work was the incorporation of the visionary protagonist. The concept of a *teatro de esperanza* that projected a glimmer of hope at its end was dependent upon the inclusion of a character that would inspire such hope. Throughout the years Buero developed characters who, despite the differences in their situations, all embodied a desire for change in the world in which they existed and an optimistic outlook on the future. The most memorable characters of Buero's theater are those that strive to break with the status quo to pursue something better: Ignacio, the blind student who wants his vision in order to perceive the world in a greater context than the school for the blind he lives in has taught him to accept; Esquilache, who wants to break with Spanish tradition in order to improve society; David, who dreams that the blind may, despite their handicap, succeed in being professional musicians in a world that tells him that such things are not possible. These three characters are examples of personalities that Buero included in nearly all of his plays with the intent of projecting that the status quo was not the limit of what was possible, but merely a state that we as

the public have come to accept as the norm, often times not realizing that such norms are often detrimental to social progress.

The function of the visionary protagonist within the context of each play's plot and theme is to accentuate the value of social change. In order to contextualize these characters into the structure of a tragedy, the visionary protagonists also faces downfalls at the end of each drama, with the realization of their dreams left unfulfilled by these characters. However, through the open endings of Buero's plays, the dreams of these characters survive their downfalls and persevere by transmitting their hopes to another character. In the previous examples of Ignacio, Esquilache and David, all three characters succumb to a tragic ending (death, exile and imprisonment, respectively). Despite the downfalls of these characters, the beliefs that they fought for survive through their transmission to another character who can pass the message on and insure that the dreams will not die. As already mentioned, the downfall of the protagonists in *En la ardiente oscuridad* and *El concierto de San Ovidio* led to the inspiration of other characters to continue to strive for social change. In the case of Esquilache in *Un soñador para un pueblo*, Esquilache's dreams of creating a just society survives despite his removal from power after attempting to bring change to the corrupted royal court of Carlos III through the hope for a better future he instills in Fernandita. By developing plots that would allow for the passing of hope from the protagonist to another character, Buero was able to give his works a tragic ending and still maintain the optimistic outlook he wished to project to his audience, and through this combination, use the downfall of the characters to highlight the underlying themes of his works and communicate these messages of social change to his audience.

Although the open ending and visionary protagonists were tools Buero incorporated into his works to allow the public to provoke an interpretation of the themes of his works, they were not, in and of themselves, what established the messages of his works. The function of the open ending was primarily to provoke reflection of the piece as a whole, while the protagonists who projected hope for the future served to inspire a potential resolution that would see society improve as a result of positive change. In order to develop the themes of his dramas, Buero had to create plots and dialog that generated the context and meaning to communicate his social criticism within a framework that would not provoke censorship. The plots of his scripts were the foundation on which he built the messages of his plays, but at times censorship inhibited what he could convey directly through text. To supercede the boundaries of such limitations, he often had to rely on other extra-textual devices to help him to express indirectly what he could not overtly include into the text of his plays. As a result, presentation of message in Buero's plays was grounded not only in the textual content of his works, but also in the imagery and settings of the plays.

One of the characteristics that distinguished Buero from his contemporaries was his ability to fuse dialog with action, circumstances, scenery and props that took on symbolic value in the overall presentation of the themes of his dramas. In *Historia de una escalera*, the history of the stairway referred to in the title comes to represent the social stagnation at the heart of the play's message. Throughout the play the staircase in front of the aging building is ever-present, only superficially changing over the passage of the thirty years during which the play's action takes place. In conjunction with the superficial changes to the lives of the characters in the play, the stairwell takes on the same fate as

the people that went up and down its steps throughout the course of the plot. The passage of time changes its look, just as it changes the look of the characters, but its evolution remains ultimately limited, just like the fates of the characters.

Buero took the use of symbol, setting and the open ending to another level in the presentation of the theme of *En la ardiente oscuridad*. Much of his criticism about society in this second major staging comes not from what is said, but rather what is perceived. The play, set in a school for the blind, uses the blindness of his characters as a means to present a greater social blindness, that of accepting an ideological status quo that did not truthfully project reality. The *moral de acero*, or iron will, which instills them with the belief that they are equal in all ways to the *videntes*, (those who are “sighted”) is offered as a representation of the power of indoctrination. The physical blindness of the characters in this play becomes a metaphor for a greater blindness, the lack of comprehension of the truth. Ignacio’s recognition of the fallacies of the school’s pedagogy and his questioning of how the blind conducted themselves in this school created a psychological link between how the characters perceive reality and how we as an audience perceive reality. During the course of the play the audience is forced to ponder the nature of truth: truth of what they believe, truth of what they are told, and truth of the motives for decisions and actions taken by others. Again, one of Buero’s intentions was to create a theater that would provoke his audience into a state of reflection of social truths. The presentation of the school, its pedagogy, and its faculty accentuate the work’s intent of questioning how we perceive the world. The school in which the students live and study is intended to be presented as a microcosm of a greater society, namely post-war Spain. The school’s philosophy that the blind students are equal

in all ways to people who can see is the heart of the debate between Ignacio and Carlos. The maintenance of this belief, however, can only be sustained inside the walls of the school as it is a controlled environment that the students know and can function in. By creating such a combination of setting and circumstance, Buero established one of the cruxes of the play's theme, that how we perceive our environment can be manipulated and controlled through ideology.

This application of symbolism was not present in all of his works, but it was a characteristic of several of his works. The references to the nude Venus in *Las meninas* becomes a symbol of the censorship of both the Inquisition in the plot of the drama as well as the censorship present at the time of the work's staging under the dictatorship. The titular skylight in *El tragaluz* served to highlight the divisions that existed in post-war Spain between those that benefited under the dictatorship and those who were left behind in society. Such symbols enhanced the quality of Buero's theater and accentuated the thematic content of his works, allowing him to communicate ideas that, if explicitly incorporated in the dialog of the play, might have been subject to suppression.

Besides symbols, Buero used other means in order to achieve a meta-communication between playwright and audience. One was the manipulation of point of view through the inclusion of handicaps in his characters. The incorporation of perceptual abnormalities in his characters was intended to provoke a re-evaluation by the audience of how they interpret the society that they live in, and it was a tool that he would use numerous times in the works he wrote during the Franco era. Buero would create works using characters suffering from states such as blindness (*En la ardiente oscuridad*, *El concierto de San Ovidio*, and *Llegada de los dioses*), deafness (*La doble historia del*

Doctor Valmy, and *El sueño de la razón*), and schizophrenia or other perceptual and psychological disorders (*El tragaluz* and *La fundación*) to accentuate that what we are told to believe and what is true are not necessarily one and the same. Through the use of these handicaps or mental states, we as spectators are allowed to experience the world from distinct points of view. By bringing the audience into this new and unexpected way of perceiving events, Buero was able to influence the way in which the spectator reacted to the events onstage. The totality of this approach created a stage environment in which the audience actively experienced what it was like to live with these conditions.

Domenech (pgs. 58-60) refers to this approach as *efectos de inmersión* (*immersion effect*), which plunges the public into the same psychological conditions that the protagonist experiences onstage with the intent of provoking a more critical response from the audience to the theme of the work. Much of the power of Buero's theater has been credited to his ability to bring spectators into the unusual worlds in which these characters exist by making them live under the same conditions as the characters so that the audience can have first-hand knowledge of what life is like for the characters.

Blindness is one of the motifs favored by Buero in the development of thematic interpretation and response. As we have seen, the blindness of the characters in *En la ardiente oscuridad* served not only to show the physical blindness that the students suffered, but the "second" blindness they suffered in their perception of reality. By creating a climax to which the only sighted character served witness, the playwright underscored the falseness of the institute's *moral de acero* and highlights the limited nature of the freedom that the students believed that they possessed. Buero used the blindness of the characters in this play in conjunction with the closed setting of the school

and its philosophy of the *moral de acero* to effectively create a symbolic atmosphere to project his greater message about life inside a closed society where one is influenced by what a person is taught to believe. In an article he published in *La Carreta* in 1962, Buero described the symbolism of blindness as

...una limitación del hombre, o sea, algo que se opone a su libertad, a su libre desarrollo. Representa por ello, de modo muy claro, el fondo de cualquier problema dramático o trágico que es siempre, en definitiva, el de la lucha del hombre, con sus limitaciones, por su libertad. Pero la ceguera además es una no vision; vencerla, siquiera sea de manera simbólica, es por lo tanto lograr una vision, o, para decirlo de otro modo, descubrir una faceta de la verdad. (O.C. II, pgs. 430-431).

For Buero, blindness ironically became a method of instilling into *En la ardiente oscuridad* a different vision of society, inspiring the audience to see reality in a different light. To this end it can be argued that the play possesses allegorical qualities, as the students' belief in the school's *moral de acero* in conjunction with the closed environment of the school's walls projects strong overtones of the closed nature of Spain under Franco and the propaganda machine he controlled through the MIT.

In the years following the premiere of *En la ardiente oscuridad*, Buero was criticized for not presenting the blind in a realistic light. Among the complaints cited were that the blind did not participate in sports or other activities that the students of his institute enjoyed (O.C. II, pgs. 332-333). As a result, Buero strived to bring further realism to the development of the characters of his next "blind" play, *El concierto de San Ovidio*. At the core of the work's theme is the issue of exploitation and the empowerment of the common man in the face of economic abuse. The presentation of the blind characters in this play is considerably more realistic: they use canes to navigate through the streets, they are limited in their movements, and they are treated as though they are

different from the rest of the population that can see. Most of the sighted characters come to treat the blind characters as inferior, setting the tone for the plot of the play. A group of blind beggars is hired by an entrepreneur, Valindin, to perform a concert at the annual fair of San Ovidio. Valindin presents himself to the mother superior of the Hospital of the Quince Veinte, a hospice for the blind, as a philanthropist interested in performing the concert and giving some of the proceeds to the hospital to help its residents. After debate among the blind performers, they agree to participate in order to improve their lot. As the play progresses, it becomes more and more evident that Valindin's intentions are not selfless, but rather that the blind performers are being manipulated for Valindin's economic benefit. Despite the blindness of the characters, they begin to perceive the reality of their situation, from their treatment by Valindin, which becomes increasingly abusive as the play progresses, to their final humiliation when they arrive at the concert to find that their costumes and venue are not those of a serious musical performance, but rather a grotesque spectacle in which they are dressed in monstrous costumes, almost like clowns, and set on a stage designed to make them nothing more than objects to be laughed at and ridiculed. Locked into a contract designed to exploit them, the blind performers have no choice but to go through with the performance and suffer the taunts of the audience. By the third act the performers, led by David, begin to rebel against Valindin and his abuses, culminating in the play's climax when David extinguishes the lights in Valindin's house and, taking advantage of the darkness in which he has the advantage, murders Valindin. It is in this key scene where the role of blindness becomes crucial to the work, as Buero used the reversal of roles, with Valindin now being blind in the darkness of the set, to project the idea of the empowerment of the average man,

showing that it is possible to resist even when confronted with what would seem to be a dominant force.

In *Llegada de los dioses*, Buero once again incorporated blindness as a symbolic element in the development of main character, Julio. In the beginning of the work, we learn that Julio is suffering from a psychosomatic illness that has left him temporarily blind. As the work progresses we come to understand the trauma that provoked his condition was when he learned that his father, Felipe, was a Nazi collaborator and war criminal. Blindness in this play is taken to another level. Rather than focusing on the inability to perceive reality or the theme of empowerment, Buero uses blindness to show how man often *chooses* to not see reality, to not confront that which one prefers not to know. In its application in the play, blindness is used as a way to criticize the horrors of Nazi atrocities during World War II. When combined with the more universal anti-war message at the core of the drama's theme and references to an off-shore nuclear accident, Julio's blindness evolves into a symbol of how society can become collectively blind to its past. The father's war crimes serves as an indirect reminder of the ties that once existed between Spain and Nazi Germany during the war, and yet is permitted because a direct correlation between the Nazis and the Franco regime is never overtly established, but rather indirectly through Julio's psychosomatic response to his father's past.

When they reviewed these "blind" plays, the censors seemed to have little issue with how blindness was incorporated into the various plays, nor with the social criticism indirectly projected through its symbolic use. In their evaluations of *El concierto de San Ovidio*, the two censors responsible for its review, Gumersindo Montes Agudo and José María Cano, both made references to Buero's first "blind" drama, *En la ardiente*

oscuridad, although these references were little more than generic comments outlining the fact that Buero had written another play employing blind characters. Of the two reports, Cano's report on *El concierto de San Ovidio* was more specific to the presentation of blindness in the work, and his overall comments suggest that he was aware of the work's theme of economic exploitation, but did not find that blindness in and of itself was an issue for the censors²⁴.

Just as Buero used blindness as a way to provoke critical response from his audience, he also employed deafness in a similar manner. The symbolic value of the inability to hear held the potential for several levels of expression. In *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, Buero created a minor character that powerfully illustrates how we selectively choose not to hear that which is unpleasant. In this work, we are introduced to the character of the grandmother, the mother of the tragic protagonist David. We come to understand during the course of the work that her husband died when David was young. David's boss, Paulus, was once enamored with the grandmother, only to lose her to David's father. Paulus then emerged years later, encouraging David to enter into the police force, and ultimately to work for him. As the plot of the play unfolds, it becomes clear that the problems at home resulting from David's association with Paulus were difficult for the grandmother to internalize. In order to avoid the terrible truths of David's

²⁴ Reports by G. Montes Agudo and J. M. Cano, dated November 4 and November 5, 1962, respectively, in file C71725 E287/62. Agudo's report only makes an indirect reference to the presentation of blindness in *En la ardiente oscuridad* by opening his criticism of the work with the phrase "[p]enetra de nuevo el autor en el mundo, area muy fundido, de los invidentes". Cano's report addresses the parallels between *En la ardiente oscuridad* and *El concierto de San Ovidio* more directly, stating "Desde el otro [drama] suyo, *En la ardiente oscuridad*, el ciego, con su fondo humano, es un personaje muy cuidado por Buero. Aquí, el conjunto de ciegos, son utilizados como símbolos amargos y efectistas de la explotación del hombre por hombre en una sociedad injusta frivola..."

work, the grandmother's deafness became a manner to avoid being emotionally drawn into the terrible truths being discussed between Mary and David. The deafness of the grandmother ultimately represented her evasion of the reality of torture and imprisonment at the center of the drama's story. As her daughter-in-law, Mary, becomes increasingly aware and afraid of the nature of her husband's work, the grandmother's deafness became symbolic of the blind eye (or ear, in this case) that society turns to the abuses committed in the name of the state. To this end, the grandmother's inability to hear mirrors the blindness that Julio suffers in *Llegada de los dioses*, in that the character's disability creates a buffer between herself and the tragic events of her life. Her deafness, though, is intermittent, as she is presented as having moments of clarity during which she rationalized her problematic history with Paulus, as well as the consequences of David's involvement with him. At the end of the work, this clarity re-emerged, providing hope that David and Mary's son Danielito may be spared the horror of following in his father's footsteps.

Buero used deafness far more directly and effectively as a tool to circumvent censorship in a later "deaf" play, *El sueño de la razón*, which focuses on the late years of the famed artist Goya. The painter, in his seventies and being nearly completely deaf, has descended into a world all his own, the character of which is dark and confrontational. In *El sueño de la razón*, Buero extended this technique to deafness by muting all of the lines directed toward Goya when addressed on stage. Buero developed the dialog between Goya and the characters that interact with him to be performed in one of two ways. The first, and preferred way, was to only have only Goya's own words articulated on stage for the audience to hear, and while the characters that interacted with him would only mouth

their lines, projecting the sensation of what it is like to converse with someone and not be able to hear the response. Through Goya's lines the audience could infer what the characters are saying to him, essentially projecting a one-sided conversation such as one might hear if they listened to someone talking on the telephone. Through additional dialog among the other characters, certain additional information was expressed to clarify context, but for the most part Buero left the members of the audience to make their own conclusions, just as a deaf person might have to when reading lips. This approach to the presentation of a deaf character allowed the public to experience for themselves what it was like to be deaf and to better understand the anguish of Goya's character, creating a greater connection between character and spectator that would enhance the audience's reception of the overall message of the play as they follow Goya's persecution and physical abuse. The script for this play does contain the actual dialog that is left unheard by the audience, so the vocalization of the lines that Goya was unable to hear remained a possibility in the staging of this work, but in keeping with the effect Buero hoped to generate by leaving these lines unheard by the audience, most productions have chosen to incorporate the simulated deaf experience to enhance the drama's impact.

Another motif that Buero used to influence dramatic response was perceptual abnormalities. Conditions such as schizophrenia, hallucinations, and insanity served the function of instilling characters with a quality that distinguished them from the other people with whom they interacted. The way in which they perceived the world and the events that they faced differed from that of the other characters, allowing them to see reality from a totally unique point of view that could be shared with the audience. Like blindness and deafness, the various psychological disorders that Buero bestows on his

characters serve a dual purpose. The first is to create an immersion effect in his works in order to draw the audience into a greater emotional response to his plays. The second purpose is to capitalize of the subtle symbolic value that these disorders represent in the entire context of the work. Buero used a psychological disorder for the first time in *Irene, o el tesoro*, using Irene's madness as a tool to develop her marginalization from the rest of the household. Her madness, the result of losing her husband and unborn child, was incorporated into the text in order to develop the plot of the drama. Through her conversations with her imaginary friend, Juanito, her greedy and abusive father-in-law Dimas is led to believe that she is hiding a fortune inside the house. Her insanity ultimately serves to underscore the abuse and exploitation that she suffers at the hands of her in-laws, and her imaginary world becomes an escape from her suffering.

Buero returned to the notion of madness as a tool for presenting social commentary years later in what is considered his masterpiece work, *El tragaluz* and took on what may have been one of the most controversial topics to reach the stage in its time, the subject of those that were vanquished by the Nationalists in the Spanish Civil War. The fact that the Civil War and its aftermath were even discussed was a first for post-war theater in Spain; that the theme centered on what became of those that had survived the defeat of the Second Republic after the passage of a generation was even more incredible. In this work we see that the Father is left schizophrenic after the trauma of the death of his infant daughter as the family fled the approaching Nationalist army. His insanity and inability to relate to the world around him served to accentuate the divide between his two sons, Vicente and Mario. Vicente, the elder son, went on to prosper under the new

regime and eventually came to represent everything that his father rejected, while Mario, the younger son, dreamed of a better future, rejecting the status quo.

The inclusion of the father's schizophrenia in this work gave Buero a symbolic tool that allowed him to address one of the most difficult topics to stage under the Franco regime, the Spanish Civil War. At the heart of the drama's theme was how those on the losing side of the war lived under the dictatorship. Throughout the course of the play Buero developed the link between the father's insanity and family's plight at the time of the Civil War (the separation of the family, the death of Mario and Vicente's baby sister Elvirita, who starved to death in the immediate aftermath of the family's exodus). His schizophrenia, we learn, was a direct result of Elvirita's death and the deprivation that the family suffered for having sympathized with the Republicans during the war. His madness was presented through the presentation of several symbolic references. One was the father's creation of paper dolls, an almost compulsive pastime, which on one level represented his lost daughter. These figures that he cut out were the result of the repressed emotions that he held concerning her loss as well as the hidden rancor that he held toward Vicente, whom he secretly blamed for Elvirita's death and the plight of the family. The father's inability to recognize Vicente as his son throughout the course of the play furthered this association between his psychological problems and the play's theme of coming to terms with the aftermath of the war.

Buero took the use of normal versus abnormal perception to a higher level in one of his most provocative works, *La fundación*. In the first act, we are presented the scene of a foundation for academic research that the audience witnesses from the point of view of the protagonist, Tomás. He and the other characters are presented as artists and

scholars, and exist in the confines of a closed scene. As the play progresses, the scene, omnipresent, begins to change before our eyes through the use of light and change of the scenery and props. The foundation, which at the beginning to the drama was comfortable and humane, evolves into a darker, austere set so that by the third act the public becomes aware that the foundation is not a place of investigation at all, but a prison cell on death row. The scholars change, almost before our eyes, from respectable academics into the sad condemned souls awaiting execution. The audience witnesses this transformation as Tomás becomes conscious of his environment, emerging from the delusion that he has developed to shield himself from the reality of his plight. In the third act, the interaction between Tomás and his cellmates changes in tone, with the cellmates treating his inquiries about their “research” as the madness that it is. Tomás’s awareness of his true surroundings is provoked when his friend Asel, rather than be taken away to be interrogated, chooses instead to jump to his death, underscoring the reality of his plight. By the end of the work, as Tomás and his remaining fellow inmate are taken to be executed, the full extent of his hallucination is understood, although Tomás allows himself to descend into his false reality as he goes to his death in order to cope with his plight.

The use of physical and psychological limitations as a mechanism for provoking critical thought seems to have had a successful application in the overall approach of *posibilismo* as the censors did not have any particular objections to the use of the motifs of blindness, deafness and schizophrenia. Their incorporation into both the plots of the works as well as into the themes of the plays allowed Buero to explore and project various social topics indirectly in a way that did not provoke censorship. By sidestepping

a direct presentation of theme, by making the theme allusive, Buero found a way to communicate social criticism on the margins of what the regime deemed unacceptable. That is not to say these works did not encounter problems with the censors - many of them did for their presentation of language, plot, and theme – but the application of perceptual abnormalities in the end were unrelated to the objections that the *vocales* cited in their reviews of the plays. Whether the censors did not fully appreciate the symbolic value of these motifs in the works or whether they found them benign enough to be permitted is unclear as the documentation in the Archivo General does not offer any detailed determination of how they perceived the incorporation of the symbolism of these conditions.

One of the most powerful vehicles for Buero's social criticism was the use of historical contexts as the backdrop for his dramas. Between 1958 and 1971 Buero wrote four historical plays: *Un soñador para un pueblo*, *Las Meninas*, *El concierto de San Ovidio*, and *El sueño de la razón*²⁵. Of these four plays, three were based on real events and characters drawn from the playwright's heritage. The fourth, *El concierto de San Ovidio*, was set in France and was not grounded in specific events or persons related to that nation's history, but rather used the over context of the socio-political situation of Louis XV's France to accentuate the drama's theme. The application of historical fiction to these plays served to create a story that could tie events from Spain's past to the reality of the present. Ruiz Ramón correctly signals this intent, saying that

²⁵ A fifth historical drama, *La detonación*, was produced in 1977, when Spain was in the midst of the transition from dictatorship to democracy. By this time censorship of theatrical works had all but ended, with the role of the censors being diminished to that of providing a rating system for plays to determine whether they were appropriate for all audiences or only for adults. For this reason I chose not to include this play in the list of historical plays mentioned, as it was not subject to censorship for content.

Buero Vallejo invitaba al espectador a desplazarse al pasado para que, mediante una acción representada, conectara racional y emocionalmente a la vez con su propio presente asumiéndolo creadoramente al asumir la pregunta propuesta por el dramaturgo. Este, merced al desplazamiento formal en el tiempo, respetando al máximo la libertad del espectador, le conducía a una personal y intransferible asunción del conflicto, cuya consecuencia era la revelación fulminante de una verdad cuyo significado operaba en el presente... (Ruiz Ramón, pg. 371).

The use of historical settings in these dramas was not merely for the purpose of ambiance. Buero's intention with the historical drama was to create plays with themes and plots set in the past that would approximate similar events that were taking place in his time, events that affected both him and his public in their everyday lives. Each of the historical settings the playwright chose had deliberate purpose, as each backdrop provided circumstances that paralleled events in Franco's Spain. By drawing his audience into a fictional past with which they could identify on certain levels, Buero was able to project social thought inside of a context with which a Spanish audience could identify. In the development of historical works relating to Spain's past, Buero had to develop his texts within the framework of real historical events. Although some degree of license was permissible in the elaboration of historical fiction, the *Normas sobre calificación de obras teatrales* did include a provision, *Norma 14.3*, which prohibited "el falsamiento tendencioso de los hechos, personajes, y ambientes históricos" (Garcia Lorenzo, pg. 233). The intent of this provision seems not necessarily to repress historical fiction, but rather to create a safeguard against the manipulation or rewriting of history with the intent of either denigrating Spain or to promote philosophies in opposition to the regime, particularly republican or leftist ideologies. To this end authors had to frame a historical work within a framework that was loyal to the historical facts and conventional interpretations of history, though they were at liberty to create fictional dialogs and

personal events as long as they were contextual and did not violate any of the other norms of censorship.

Buero approached historical theater with the intent that it be loyal to the facts of history to the extent that the background events were factually depicted, but took liberty with the nature of dialog and personal interactions between characters which history would never have recorded. Buero's viewed the historical drama as a:

...labor estética y social de creación e invención, que debe, no ya refrendar, sino ir por delante de la historia más o menos establecida, abrir nuevas vías de comprensión de la misma y inducir interpretaciones históricas más exactas. Que, para lograrlo, el autor no tiene por qué ceñirse a total fidelidad cronológica, especial o biográfica respecto de los hechos comprobados, es cosa en la que no hay que insistir (O.C. II, pg. 826).

With this in mind, Buero did draw the distinction that his historical plays were first and foremost fiction set in the context of either factual events or, in the case of *El concierto de San Ovidio*, a broad-based historical context based in a foreign country (France) and not based on a true event at all. With the exception of *El concierto de San Ovidio*, the historical dramas Buero wrote were set in Spain and were based on real events and people. He did not attempt to rewrite history, perhaps knowing that to do so could provoke problems with the censors. What he did in the elaboration of his historical works was to create fiction around the unknown personal interactions of the characters while respecting the facts surrounding what was publicly known of these people. In this way it was possible to manipulate the use the historical events in order to advance the themes of his works.

The first of Buero's historical plays, *Un soñador para un pueblo*, marked the author's transition to a theater increasingly critical of aspects of the social situation of

post-war Spain. In this work Buero's works began to evolve from themes related to the human condition to a more politically-minded theater, taking to issue the Franco regime by focusing on more specific, concrete topics derived from the problems that existed as a result of the dictatorship. In making this transition, Buero's style and dramatic sensibilities continued as before, as did his use of the open endings of his works. What made this work unique in comparison to the plays he had written previously is the correlation that the work makes between the decadence of society and abuses of power and privilege by those of the ruling class between the upper echelons of the monarchy as depicted in the play and the cadres of the dictatorship of 1950's Spain. From the time of the staging of *Un soñador para un pueblo* until the end of the dictatorship, each subsequent work Buero staged pushed the envelope of the acceptable more than the preceding play, and as a result bring him under greater scrutiny from the censorial apparatus of the regime. The historical drama became one of his favorite vehicles for social commentary because it allowed for him to develop theme around a concrete example grounded in history, but yet contain meaning relevant to present society.

Buero's theater has been influenced to some extent by his readings of the works of Bertolt Brecht, although in many cases by the rejection of some of the theories of the German author rather than their acceptance. Both authors shared the idea that theater should exist not just to entertain the masses, but also to provoke critical thought in the audience's mind. Brecht's theater was based on the concept of *Verfremdungseffekt*, often referred to as the "V-effekt" or distancing effect, in which the goal of the theatrical representation of a play is not to draw the public into an emotional association with the characters, but rather leave the audience emotionally detached from them.. He believed

that it was necessary to leave the audience alienated from the action of the piece and relegate them to the role of witnesses to events in order to be critical spectators. He saw drama as having a didactic function as well as an entertaining value in that, as Esslin puts it. “the Brechtian stage approximates a lecture hall, to which audiences come in the expectation that they will be informed, and also the circus arena, where the audience, without identification or illusion, watches performers exhibit their special skills” (Esslin, pg. 133). Actors, to this end, were to take on the role as conveyors of messages, not to *become* the characters they were representing. The Brechtian performer was intended to do nothing more than to narrate a story in such a way that the audience be informed of the story, not participate²⁶.

Two of Buero’s plays, *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* and *El tragaluz*, were directly influenced by Brecht’s writings in that the members of the audience were treated as witnesses to the events of the plot. Both works employ omniscient narrators that set the stage for the action of the dramas, informing the audience in advance that they are witnesses. In the case of *Doctor Valmy*, the narrators establish that story is of events taking place in the faraway land of Surelia, and claim that the events of the drama are either false or exaggerated. The credibility of these narrators, though, is brought into question at the end of the work when they are taken away by what are assumed to be orderlies of a mental hospital. In *El tragaluz*, the omniscient narrators are presented as researchers living in the distant future who are staging a reconstruction of past events through the use of advanced technology. The employment of both pairs of narrators

²⁶ See Esslin, Chapter VI for additional information on Brecht and his theories on theater.

serves to underscore the fictional nature of what is to unfold on stage, creating Brecht's distancing effect by planting in the minds of the public that their role is to observe and not identify with what they are viewing. Both of these plays develop their arguments around the public acting as witnesses to events introduced by omniscient narrators. In the first of these plays narration is layered between the initial narrators introducing Dr. Valmy, who is dictating a book to his secretary. The double narration creates a distancing effect that allows for a degree of detachment on the part of the audience. In the case of *El tragaluz* Buero once again uses two omniscient narrators to open his story. Events in this play are developed in the scenes taking place in the home as if the public were voyeurs looking through the *tragaluz*, or skylight, of the basement apartment.

The distinction between Buero and Brecht's use of omniscient narrators came from how each playwright approached critical response. For Brecht, social theater was intended to be completely didactic in nature, with the intent of only presenting the cold facts of the story to promote a rational interpretation of events. Narration was intended to constantly remind the audience that they were only watching events on a stage, and that what they were seeing was not real. Buero, on the other hand, negated this aspect of the *V-Effekt*, believing that emotional response was key to achieving a deeper reception of the works' themes. His incorporation of narrators in *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* and *El tragaluz* served to enhance emotional impact of these two works. In the former, the narrators cast doubt on the possibility that the events of torture projected in the play could have really happened, only to have that doubt negated by the implication that the narrators are insane. For the audience, their 'orthodox' perspective is discredited, while the heterodox one presented by David and Mary is validated. In *El tragaluz*, conversely,

the 'heterodox' narrators align themselves with the audience to validate the events of the work as a scene of a forgotten distant past which represents the plight of those disenfranchised in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War who should be vindicated, but are marginalized in the dominant, orthodox social order.

Beyond this aspect of distancing effect, Buero's work was written not with the intent to objectively present events to the public, but with the intent of drawing the audience into the story emotionally and not to distance them from the plot to achieve an objective response. The vast majority of his works were written with the intent of involving those who saw his dramas in the situations being presented on the stage in order to provoke a reception of his theater that would touch his public. By involving the audience in the story, the playwright was able to stimulate associations between the themes of his plays and the personal experiences of the spectator in order to show the relevance of his criticism to everyday life. The *teatro de inmersión* allows us to experience the various feelings or plights of those characters and sympathize, just as we would sympathize with a real person going through an event we have been through ourselves. Going back to *Historia de una escalera*, when we look at the seemingly unresolved ending of play in which the characters' fate seems likely to repeat that of their parents, many viewers of that final scene could identify at some personal level of feeling trapped in their existence for the decadence and stagnation of their own society.

Another break that Buero made with Brecht's theories was the incorporation of lighting strategies to evoke emotional response from his audience. Brecht often used strong lighting in his plays so that his audiences would not lose the perspective that they were in a theater watching a performance. Sometimes he would take this further by

putting spotlights on stage where they could be openly seen. This served Brecht's intent of distancing the stage performance from the public's reality, as the public was continually aware that what they were viewing on stage was nothing more than a representation of a story, and not an experience with which they could connect on a personal level. Buero, on the other hand, used lighting techniques, particularly low lights or darkness, in different ways to subject the audience to perceptual differences that equated what the characters experience. In *En la ardiente oscuridad* and *El concierto de San Ovidio*, lighting was used to bring the audience into the realm of the blind characters at the center of these works. *En la ardiente oscuridad* used an almost continual low light, preventing everything except the characters from being seen. The gloom and vagueness of the set in this case prevented the viewer from perceiving most of the character's surroundings, leaving those who were watching the play effectively blind. In *El concierto de San Ovidio*, lighting was for the most part projected at a normal level to coincide with the background of the "sighted" world, but in a key scene was completely cut in order to accentuate the utter helplessness of the antagonist Valindin when he finds himself in the dark with David at the moment of his demise. By using dim lights, and in crucial scenes plunging the audience into complete darkness, Buero was able to duplicate the realm in which his characters existed, enhancing the audience's ability to associate with the circumstances of the people on stage. In *La fundación*, manipulation of the lighting in combination with the evolution of the set, merged to form the hallucinatory effect that underlined Tomás's dream world. In the first act of the play, the lights are lower, creating an effect that made the scene less vibrant and real to the audience. As the play progressed, the lighting became brighter to enhance the focus on the scenery, which

changed with each act to make the transformation from an academic foundation to a prison cell on death row. By the end of the play, the lights in the theater were up to vibrantly show that what the audience had seen at the beginning had in fact been nothing more than the illusion that Tomás had created in his own mind.

The use of immersion effect in the staging of his plays was not limited to lighting. Sound and manipulation of the set were also tools that Buero employed in order to provoke an aesthetic response in his audience. As mentioned earlier, Buero manipulated the use of sound in a manner similar to how he manipulated lighting in *El sueño de la razón*, again with the intent of creating a deeper understanding of the condition of Goya's deafness. The transformation of the set throughout the course of *La fundación* also allowed for the spectator to emerge from Tomás's delusional state alongside the character as he transitioned between the false reality he had created and the "reality" of the death row cell he occupied. Such applications of staging allowed for Buero to create unique and powerful settings that further enhanced the overall themes of these works.

Plays Subject to Slight or No Censorship

Of the 19 plays that Buero submitted to the censors for permission for production, 17 were approved for performance in their time. This high percentage of successful submissions is striking when one considers that other authors writing socially critical theater, such as Sastre, were far less successful in bringing their theater to the stage under censorship. The overall combination of the thematic, stylistic and staging elements that Buero incorporated into his works, combined with the restraint he maintained in framing the arguments of his plays, allowed for him to see nearly all of his plays approved for production despite the potentially polemic topics he addressed. Buero was able to

combine various techniques to project social criticism in many of his works in a way that would subtly convey theme in a non-confrontational manner that would not provoke the censors. These applications of symbol, historical settings and situation, either individually or in tandem, allowed Buero to transcend the limitations of censorship and express ideas that, if stated directly, would have been silenced by the regime. The success that Buero had in consistently being able to stage his works under the dictatorship in the end shows that *posibilismo* as an approach to theatrical creation was a successful one.

Nevertheless, the success that Buero found in gaining authorization for his works was not without some degree of compromise. To an extent Buero was forced to make revisions to nearly all of his plays in order to gain their final approval. Usually these revisions were limited to replacing certain words, or even omitting or changing whole phrases such as the examples cited in the case of *Historia de una escalera*, and for the most part reflected either fleeting political references or a choice of language that the *vocales* found problematic. Of the 17 plays that were approved, none of the changes he had to make led to a deviation from the plots and themes that Buero developed in the original drafts he submitted to the censors. These changes did, on occasion, eliminate some of the more salient associations between plot and theme in his works, as well as imagery that could serve to further underline the ideas he wished to transmit to the audience, but despite the suppression of these elements, the works still succeeded in expressing their overall social arguments without a substantial loss of message.

The following pages provide a chronology of the works he submitted to the censors during the Franco era, the circumstances of each play and discussion of the text that Buero was required to cut in order to receive authorization for their productions:

Palabras en la arena (1949). When this work was initially submitted for production during a one-time performance for the Asociación de Amigos de los Quintero, it was approved without changes for performance²⁷. Given that it was a play which took an episode from the Bible as the foundation for its plot, however, subsequent performances were denied for circumstantial reasons relating to its religious nature. These will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

En la ardiente oscuridad (1950). Despite its use of the symbolism of blindness, as well as the allegoric value of the school as a closed society with its *moral de acero*, this play surprisingly met with no difficulty from the reviewing censor, Gumersindo Montes Agudo, whose report does not point to any political or moral problem with the play, although his overall summary of the work shows that he personally did not care for it. His personal judgment of the play, however, did not stop him from approving it without revisions²⁸.

La tejedora de sueños (1952). In this dramatization of Homer's The Odyssey, Buero focuses on Ulysses' return from the Trojan Wars from the point of view of his wife Penelope. At issue is her abandonment and loneliness, as well as the numerous suitors that vie to take Ulysses' place. The work is approved without cuts, and is even applauded by one of the censors, who is obviously a fan of Greek tragedy and states that the play "puede y debe representarse"²⁹. Although this play focuses primarily on the topics of marital fidelity and honor, Buero does mesh into his plot subtle arguments against war,

²⁷ Report by G. Montes Agudo dated September 21, 1949 in file C 71.418 E 409-49.

²⁸ Report by G. Montes Agudo dated November 21, 1950 in file C 71.423 E 473-50. Also contained in this file is the subsequent authorization of the Head of the Section of Cinematography and Theater dated the same day.

contextualized in Ulysses' participation in a war fought over Helen of Troy and Penelope's lamenting of her husband's absence as a result of the war. Buero had no trouble communicating this message since the work was grounded in classical literature that was universally read and accepted.

La señal que se espera (1952). This comedy, considered mediocre even by Buero, was nonetheless approved by the censors without cuts, although it is apparent from the censors' reports that they too thought it was a bad script. The plot centers on Enrique, who invites his wife's ex-boyfriend Luis, a composer of music, to visit in order to see if she is still in love with him. Luis, who went mad as a result of the break-up, falls into a depression until he constructs a magical harp, with which he contents himself. Enrique worries the music will woo Susana, Enrique's wife. In the end Enrique discovers that his wife truly loves him and Luis leaves happily with his harp. The play was essentially a melodramatic comedy which did not contain material of any social or moral concern for the censors, although in a later staging in Zaragoza the regional official in charge of theatrical productions for that province, Félix Ayala, did express some concerns that the play projected certain "[c]reencias en fuerzas ocultas, al margen de una moral católica"³⁰. These concerns were based no doubt on the overall plot of the play and the idea of a man inviting another man to his home to observe how his wife interacts with him, but given the play's innocent presentation of these events, this argument was not a compelling enough reason to justify censorship.

²⁹ Report by E. Morales de Acevedo dated October 7, 1950 in file C71421 E 411/50.

³⁰ Letter from Félix Ayala to the Director General of Cinematography and Theater, dated November 10, 1958, located in file C 78551 E 30/52. There is no evidence that Ayala's concern resulted in a denial of production in Zaragoza. As there is no evidence that any production of this play was ever denied, my

Aventura en lo gris (1952; 1953; 1963). This drama was the first of two that Buero wrote that was prohibited by the censors in its initial submission for approval. Set in a fictional country that had just been invaded and had its leader deposed, the work was prohibited for the allusions made to the state of Spanish society, as well as for the parallels that the work developed between the nation's deposed president and Benito Mussolini. The censorship of this work was due to concerns about its political intent and certain moral aspects of the work, as well as difficulties in production. After considerable time and revision, *Aventura en lo gris* was approved for production in 1963. The complex circumstances behind this work's prohibition will be addressed in detail in Chapter 4.

Casi un cuento de hadas (1953). With this work Buero undertook to write a "fairy tale" drama. Leticia, a beautiful but rather slow princess, cannot find a suitor because no one will marry her for her lack of intelligence. Her twin sister, Laura, is the opposite; she is ugly but very intelligent. In order to see Leticia married, she is introduced to Riquet, an ugly prince. At first she rejects him for his appearance, but as she gets to know him, she falls in love with him and sees his inner beauty, which later becomes an external beauty as Riquet transforms into a handsome prince for those capable of seeing his inner beauty. The plot is complicated by circumstances such as a rival suitor and Laura's jealousy, but in the end Leticia and Riquet realize they need each other and live happily ever after.

Given this play's straight-forward plot and theme, albeit perhaps somewhat infantile, the work met with no significant problems with the censors, who approved it for production and with very little comment. The only really interesting mention in the

interpretation of the statement was that it was a passing concern that Ayala expressed in his letter (perhaps influenced by yet another bad reception of this play?) and not one that was ever acted upon by the censors.

documentation of this play was a recommendation by the reviewing censor, Emilio Morales de Acevedo, for the elimination of a couple of lines in the first act. The dialog relates to an exchange between the King and Queen in the presence of their Chancellor, Darío. The King, who shows evidence of being ill, prepares to leave. Asked if is leaving to hunt, the King replies that he is leaving for other motives. As a result, the following dialog ensues:

Reina: ¿Cuál?

Rey: ¡Por Dios, Juana! ¡Queréis saberlo todo! (*Avergonzado*) No puede decirse. (*Sale disparado*).

Reina: (*Ofendida*) ¡Oh!

Darío: Uno de los lunares que más pueden afean a los reyes es la falta de etiqueta. Si el padre no puede dejar de mostrar su... humanidad, ¿cómo va a dejar la hija de sentarse en el suelo? (O.C., II, pg. 274).

In context, Morales de Acevedo's reason for suggesting the elimination of this exchange seems motivated by the underlying insinuation developed in these lines that the king was excusing himself to go the bathroom, although Morales de Acevedo never directly qualifies the reason for this cut in his report³¹. This scene was, however, conserved in the final text of the play. Despite the fact that this dialog raised the censor's eyebrows, it was not, in the end, suggestive or offensive enough to merit the lines' removal from the text, and the play was approved without any cuts³².

Madrugada (1953). Returning to a more realistic plot and theme, Buero writes *Madrugada* with the intent of exploring the human psyche and the power of greed. Mauricio, a famous and wealthy artist, has just died. Months prior to his death, he secretly wed his long-time lover Amalia, a fact which his family does not know.

³¹ Report by E. Morales de Acevedo dated January 5, 1953 in file C78587 E 456-52.

³² *Dictamen final* dated January 5, 1953 in file C78587 E 456-52.

Questioning whether or not Mauricio married her out of love or to ensure her inheritance, Amalia pretends that Mauricio is on his deathbed but still alive when his family arrives, feigning this with the intent of trying to discover what the family may know about what Mauricio truly felt for her and what he may have told them. As the plot unfolds, the greed of several of the family members becomes apparent as they invent reasons to justify why Amalia is not entitled to an inheritance. Through these false stories and the family's infighting to gain an advantage in inheriting Mauricio's estate, Amalia discovers that Mauricio did marry her out of love, after which time she declares the truth to the family and the terms of Mauricio's will.

This play is reviewed by two censors, Francisco Ortiz Muñoz and Father Mauricio de Begoña. In his report, Ortiz Muñoz underlines one page of text for scrutiny relating to how Mauricio's nephew, Leandro, refers to his father Lorenzo, Mauricio's older brother. In Act II, we come to understand the strained relationship that Leandro has with his father. At issue in the underlined segment are two things. The first is Leandro's lack of respect for his father, who he sees as only having an interest in Mauricio's money and having no true love for his brother. The second, later in the conversation, is Leandro's admission that he is enamored with Amalia as he makes an advance on her. Ortiz Muñoz overall summarizes his concerns with this scene as based in the "peligrosidad a un asunto en el que los odios, egoismos, pasiones e infidelidad entre padre y hijo constituyen la base de la fuerza dramática"³³. Father de Begoña, however, did not cite any difficulty with this scene, which is surprising given the moral basis for Ortiz Muñoz's objections.

³³ Report by Francisco Ortiz Muñoz dated November 23, 1953 in file C 71679 E 402/53.

Ultimately the passage that Ortiz Muñoz found questionable was conserved in the final text of the play, and the work was approved without any cuts.

Irene, o el tesoro (1954). Irene, after being widowed at a young age and giving birth to a still-born child, goes to live with her in-laws. Irene, out of destitution, is forced to live with a family that emotionally abuses her and treats her like a servant. She is particularly mistreated by her father-in-law, Dimas, an abusive usurper more concerned about money than people, least of all Irene. As a result of her suffering, she suffers from psychological problems and has become completely detached from the rest of the world. In her personal world, she comes to know an imaginary friend, Juanito, who tells her of a treasure hidden inside the apartment in which she lives. Dimas, who was preparing to send her away to a mental institution, learns that a treasure might exist in the house, and tries to learn the truth from Irene.

Like most of the plays Buero wrote in the 1950's, this play was approved without any cuts. What is highly unusual about *Irene, o el tesoro* is not so much the presentation of Irene's imaginary friend, nor the overall theme of human greed and cruelty, but the play's climax. At the end of the play her imaginary friend, rising into heaven, beckons her to come with him. Irene follows him to the window, where the stage notes show a stairway is located to allow for her ascent. This, of course, the spectator understands and witnesses. From the point of view of the other characters, however, Irene is seen to go to the window and fall to her death. In creating this ending, Buero ingeniously developed a double interpretation of the climax of the play. In the overall plot, Irene achieves salvation and is freed from her oppression on Earth. However, in the context of the action of the play, she is seen to have committed suicide. Given that the *Normas de calificación*

de obras teatrales included a prohibition of the presentation of suicide, the dual interpretation of the play's climax was necessary in order to incorporate such an ending.

For the most part Buero avoided taking on the various religious taboos that were prohibited by the censors. Although he occasionally included phrases or imagery critical of the clergy that were suppressed by the censors, his theater cannot be considered on the whole as being anti-clerical. Although there is no apparent explanation for why this ending was chosen, it would seem logical that the motivation for such an ending was for dramatic effect and not to challenge the system. Given that the ending the audience perceived is one of salvation and ascension into heaven, Buero was successfully able to incorporate a suicide as perceived by the other characters into the plot of *Irene, o el tesoro*, which the censors approved without changes or mention in their reports³⁴.

Hoy es fiesta (1955, 1956). Reminiscent of the scenes and images of *Historia de una escalera*, *Hoy es fiesta* examines the lives of a group of people living in an apartment building in a poorer neighborhood. The plot centers on an examination of the social problems of the lower classes and how money and greed can be a destructive force. The characters pool their money to buy lottery tickets, entrusting the money to purchase the tickets to Doña Balbina, a woman living in great poverty but pretending to live well out of pride. Doña Balbina also forces her daughter Daniela to live this same lie. When the numbers the residents choose turn out to be the winning numbers, everyone rejoices until it is discovered that Doña Balbina never bought the ticket, having instead used the money

³⁴ ” Report dated November 18, 1954 in file C 78660 E 354-54. The documentation on *Irene, o el tesoro* was very brief, with only a few brief reports and a favorable *dictamen final* being found in the file. The *dictamen final* does not address anything related to the issue of Irene's suicide, but it does affirm that the play did not contain material in conflict with the “orden ético, político, social o religioso”.

to buy food. The other residents, enraged that they have lost out on the chance to win the lottery and that they were deceived by Doña Balbina, turn against her until one of the residents, Silverio, convinces the others that nothing is to be gained by persecuting her or denouncing her to the police. The play ends in contemplation of both loss and hope for the future.

Again, given that this tragedy explores issues relating to universal human nature, the censors did not have any significant objections to the script's underlying themes. In his report, Emilio Morales de Acevedo did initially suggested the elimination of one phrase, in which one of the characters, Remedios, while reflecting on how she had met her friend Doña Nieves, established that the two had met “cuando nos evacuaron durante la guerra...”³⁵. For reasons not clearly established in either the *Normas* or by Morales de Acevedo in his report, reference to the Spanish Civil War were highly scrutinized by the censors, even when made in passing such as in this context. The obvious underlying concern for the censors was evoking memories of the political divide that existed in Spain less than twenty years prior to the consideration of this play. However, for reasons unknown, the producer, Claudio de la Torre, requested that his petition be withdrawn. He then resubmitted the play again in 1956, at which time it was reviewed by a second censor, Bartolomé Mostaza. In his report Mostaza did not suggest the omission of the phrase in question, and the *dictamen final* of the play allowed for its production without any changes, including the line that Morales de Acevedo had questioned³⁶.

³⁵ Report by Emilio Morales de Acevedo dated October 22, 1955 in file C 71689 E 297-55.

³⁶ Report by Bartolomé Mostaza dated September 19, 1956 in file C 71689 E 297-55.

Las cartas boca abajo (1957). In this drama, Buero explores the themes of jealousy and egoism. In this drama, Juan, a college instructor having repeatedly failed to earn tenure, finds himself frustrated in both his professional and personal life. His wife, Adela, unhappy with their situation, thinks of her old love Carlos, now a successful author and scholar. We come to understand that she was rejected by Carlos, and married Juan in part to show Carlos what he had lost by helping Juan to achieve success, which never comes about. Juan, jealous of Carlos, rejects anything having to do with Carlos, including reading his work and allowing for Carlos to help his son Juanito gain entry into the university. His jealousy results in his downfall as his petition for tenure is once again rejected as a result of his ignorance of Carlos's work.

The theme of jealousy and vanity in this work did not present any issues that were politically or morally problematic. The reviewing censor, Emilio Morales de Acevedo, did not have any objections to the content or presentation of this play, and authorized its production without any cuts³⁷.

Un soñador para un pueblo (1958). The first of Buero's historical plays, this drama is set in 1766 during the early years of the reign of Carlos III. Esquilache, the Italian marquis that served as the king's minister of Finance finds himself in a royal court run through corruption and personal favors rather than reason and merit, as well as a society that preferred tradition over progress. In the spirit of the Enlightenment, Esquilache attempted to bring positive change to Madrid. His policies angered other members of the court, who saw him as a threat to their privileges, as well as the public, who did not like the changes he instigates. After a series of intrigues onstage, a riot

instigated by the Marquis de Ensenada leads to Esquilache's resignation and exile from Spain, crushing his dream for bringing change and progress to Spanish society.

In *Un soñador*, Buero sets the plot of the play in Madrid during the early years of the reign of Carlos III, at the time of the "Motín de Esquilache" (the Esquilache Riot). This riot, an uprising by hungry residents of Madrid that really occurred in 1766, in a time of famine, is looked at from a different point of view in Buero's version of the events. The protest, both historically as well as in Buero's story, was directed against the Marquis of Esquilache, one of the ministers of Carlos III. History for the most part has treated the Marquis rather poorly, as historians in Spain have presented Esquilache, an Italian, as an outsider attempting to bring unpopular changes to Spain in order to "Europeanize" the monarchy and Spanish law. Whether this is the result of some nationalistic interpretation on the part of scholars that have studied Esquilache, or whether this depiction of him stems from his failure to achieve popular support for his programs is unclear. The discussion of how history views Esquilache is only worthy of mention because Buero, in developing his play, looked at the Marquis from a different point of view, treating him as a visionary reformer trying to bring changes to a government plagued by corruption and indifference to the plight of the masses. Despite the fact that some of his policies proved unpopular with both the people as well as his peers in the court, Buero's Esquilache is portrayed as a man of good intention surrounded by those who would use the monarchy for their own benefits, including Esquilache's own wife, whom he chastises for using her position to obtain personal favors.

³⁷ Report by Emilio Morales de Acevedo dated October 5, 1957 in File C 71697 E 247-57.

The ultimate theme of the work is a look at how government should function, namely that reforms in a time of absolutism were necessary in order to improve the quality of life for the people as a whole. In the end, Buero's Esquilache, as the historical figure upon which the author bases his character, is forced out as a result of the riot, and is sent back to Italy a vanquished, broken man, his dreams for the improvement of Spain destroyed. Its relevance to the question of how the government should serve its people and change to progress with the rest of Western society was as relevant to post-war Spain as it was to the Spain of Carlos III.

Compared to the works Buero had submitted to the censors prior to this play, the censors expressed considerably greater reservations about *Un soñador para un pueblo*. The two reviewing censors, Alfredo Timerans and Pio García Escudero, both cited how history was presented in the play, given that they were charged with rooting out any historical interpretation that would besmirch the regime³⁸. In his report, Timerans for the most part did not seem troubled with the work from a historical point of view, writing “La obra parece tener un gran rigor histórico y significa una reivindicación del reinado de Carlos III y principalmente de su Ministro Esquilache. La figura del Monarca está tocada con toda dignidad y refleja el intento del mismo, en union de su Ministro, de superar una época de dejadez, abandono y negligencia”³⁹. However, Timerans does express concern with how the Marquis de Ensenada's is suggested to be behind the uprising that brings down Esquilache. García Escudero's report also questions the presentation of history in

³⁸ As was mentioned in Chapter 2, one of the requirements for historical plays was that they represent history accurately and not manipulate or misrepresent historical facts in a way that reflected negatively on the State or the government. This provision is listed in the *Normas sobre calificación de obras teatrales*. Although *Un soñador para un pueblo* predates the application of the *Normas*, it is safe to assume that these concerns existed prior to their codification in 1963.

the work, pointing specifically to the presentation of Esquilache as an enlightened Francophile whose actions and beliefs reflect negatively on the Spanish people⁴⁰. Both censors express some concern for the accuracy of the historical background of the story, but the *dictamen final* for the play does not make mention of this, suggesting that the questions the censors raised were not serious enough to merit the work's prohibition.

As a result of the heightened critical tone of the play, the censors initially called for the suppression of a large number of lines. The primary concerns that both censors cited were for the sociopolitical overtones of the play. These can be categorized into two groups: Esquilache's criticisms of the decadence and corruption of the nobility, and general criticism of the Spanish people for choosing traditionalism over social progress. Most of the lines that were cited for suppression came from a dialog between Esquilache and the Duke of Villasanta, another noble unhappy with the changes that Esquilache tries to implement in Spain. In this dialog, Esquilache criticizes the overall lack of progress that has occurred as a result of maintaining a government controlled by the nobility that exists to serve its own interests and is unresponsive to the needs of its citizens. What the censors underline is the negative picture that Esquilache paints of the poor administration of the government.

The *dictamen final* ultimately called for changes to the text in one key scene that outlines much of the political message of the play. The first of these revisions is a rather curious word change from what would seem to be a very innocent phrase. In the first act

³⁹ Report by Alfredo Timerans dated December 1, 1958 in File C 78779 E 293-58.

⁴⁰ Report by Pío García Escudero dated December 8, 1958 in File C 78779 E 293-58 In reference to how the French Enlightenment influenced Esquilache's characters, García Escudero stated "El afrancesamiento

of the play, the King, questioning Esquilache's presence in the royal palace, asks "¿Tú, en el Pardo?". The censors suggest that the reference to the Pardo, the historic residence of the Spanish monarchs, be struck from the text and replaced with the word "palacio". Patricia O'Connor offers the best explanation for this seemingly unusual change, as she reminds us that El Pardo was Franco's official residence during his years as head of state. In order to prevent any comparison between Carlos III's court and Franco's government, the censors suggest "palacio" as an alternative to a reference to El Pardo. However, a reference to the royal palace was not historically accurate, as Carlos III spent little time there. In order to conserve the verosimilarity of the work and its historical context, the line is replaced with the generic phrase "¿Tú aquí?" in the final revision of the work (O'Connor, pg. 285).

The other changes that the censors required were the revision and elimination of the king's opinions of the court that surrounds him, which projected a very negative opinion about the nature of politicians in general. Below is the dialog as Buero originally wrote it, with the omitted words marked in brackets:

El Rey:... ¿Sabes por qué eres mi predilecto, Leopoldo? Porque eres un soñador. Los demás... [son políticos, o sea malvados]. Se llenan la boca de las grandes palabras, y en el fondo, sólo esconden mezquindad y egoísmo. Tú estás hecho al revés: te ven por fuera como el más astuto y ambicioso, y eres un soñador ingenuo, capaz de los más finos escrúpulos de conciencia.

Esquilache: Perdón, señor?

El Rey: ¿Perdón? No. España necesita soñadores que sepan los números, como tú, [y no eso que llamamos políticos]..."⁴¹

de Esquilache parece justificarse en numerosas frases que, a mi juicio, llegan a deformar la verdad histórica y son poco favorables para España y para el pueblo español".

⁴¹ The text is drawn from the original script submitted to the censors, located in File C 78779 E 293-58.

The king's disdain for those that run his country is very apparent, and the censors' objections were based not so much in the historical context of how the nobility may not have adeptly run Spain in the eighteenth century, but rather how a modern audience might associate the king's condemnation of the members of his court with members of the Franco government. The fact that only the two bracketed phrases represent the only text to be eliminated suggests that the primary concern of the censors was to eliminate the direct references to politicians. This, it seems, was in order to contain the context of the dialog to a reference to the members of Carlos III's court, and not allow for the criticism to extend itself to all politicians, especially those of the regime.

Although these phrases represented the most obvious approximations made between the historical scene onstage and the circumstances of Spain in 1958, the overall message of social change that the work intended to present remained intact. The impact of the loss of a direct reference to politicians did not detract from the play's presentation of Spain's poor and unprogressive administration by nobles motivated by self-interest rather than by what was good for the people. The censors did not object to this overall argument, perhaps for not seeing that a parallel existed between Spain's past and the late 1950's, during which Spain was enjoying economic growth and rapid modernization. What the censors objected to overall appears to be the degradation of the state through direct discourse in the play, particularly the references alluding to politicians being motivated by self interest. In the end, it was these lines that were cut.

Las meninas (1960). Buero's second historical drama, *Las meninas*, drew even closer parallels between the dictatorship and the age of absolute monarchs by creating a story about the artist Velázquez. In this work Buero presents Velázquez as being caught

up in an intrigue designed to strip him of his patronage by the king, Felipe IV. Velásquez is attacked for having painted a nude painting of the goddess Venus at a time when the Inquisition prohibited such representations. As a result of the denunciations leveled against him, Velásquez is taken before a tribunal of the Holy Office and placed on trial for blasphemy against the morality of the Church. The charges brought against him are multiplied, as during the course of the trial he is also accused of attempting to seduce the *infanta* Maria Teresa and of harboring a fugitive, Pedro, who had once served as a model for one of Velásquez's paintings years before. Through a last-minute intervention by Maria Teresa, Velásquez is saved, although his painting is suppressed by the Inquisition and, more personally painful, Pedro is executed.

This work's purpose, as Iglesias Feijóo puts it, is to speak to the present through the past, creating a direct comparison between the themes of the drama and their relevance to policy under the dictatorship (Iglesias Feijóo, pg. 259). In this play Buero drew parallels between several social topics that relate directly to Franco's Spain. The first, and most directly presented, is the criticism of governmental and clerical suppression of art and thought. The play becomes an allegory of life under the dictatorship, as Buero creates a psychological connection between Spain under Felipe IV and the Inquisition and the situation of post-war Spain. The repression of ideas, as developed in the drama, is presented in the context of the constraints of XVII century society. To a spectator viewing a staging of this work in Franco's time, however, the work brings out the parallel of the limitations imposed on expression in both time frames.

Las meninas also examines the nature of justice and punishment under the Inquisition. The nature of this tribunal, to judge Velásquez as a heretic, presents a one-

sided view of crime and punishment as Velásquez enters the court essentially already condemned. In this depiction of justice, Buero seems to attempt to create a comparison between the ecclesiastical courts of Felipe IV and the justice system of post-war Spain. The trial, taking place before the king, who acted as judge, becomes an allegorical critique of the arbitrary nature of justice in Spain under Franco. The scene depicts a system of law in which those in power, namely the ministers of the king, can bring charges (regardless of their validity) against another and force that individual to prove himself innocent of acts he never committed. The execution of Velásquez's friend Pedro also develops another topic related to justice under Franco, that of capital punishment. This was a theme close to Buero's heart given the experience of his own condemnation to death in 1939-1940, and a topic that would reappear again later in another drama, *La fundación*.

The censors had mixed reactions to this play. The first of the censors to review the script, Father Manuel Villares, did not express any concerns with Buero's depiction of the historical or religious undertones of the work, stating

Desde un punto de vista histórico-religioso, al hacer intervenir a La Inquisición en la acusación de que ha pintado una mujer desnuda, tampoco le encuentro reparo. En primer lugar, porque es un hecho histórico, puesto que era cometido de ese alto Tribunal Salvaguardar la fe y la moral de costumbres y en segundo lugar porque está tratado con toda corrección...⁴²

A second report by Gumersindo Montes Agudo also affirms that the play is acceptable to him. The only issue which he signals as being questionable is how the work presents the royal family in a somewhat cruel light, although he contextualizes this

⁴² Report by Father Manuel Villares dated October 18, 1960 in File C/71715 E 296-60.

concern by saying that Buero was just in his depiction of these characters and that the development of the characters was historically sound.

A third report by José María Cano contradicts the receptions of Father Villares and Cano, expressing significant concern for the underlying arguments of the play and how they reflect Francoist Spain. Cano's report outlined that on the surface *Las meninas* is an excellent drama, but that a deeper reading of the allusions and allegories projected in the work presented issues of great concern. In his report he outlined the following concerns:

No podemos ignorar, sin embargo, en este caso de qué se trata Buero Vallejo y de qué sus posibles alusiones a problemas actuales deben mirarse con precaución. Los puntos de esta obra donde pueden encontrarse esas alusiones son los siguientes:

- 1) Ambiente de corrupción cortesana: el marqués que adula, engaña y olvida de los humildes haciendo su "ajuste".
- 2) La discusión sobre las normas de la Inquisición acerca de la exhibición de desnudos. Lo alude claramente a la censura estatal y se critica la mirada "sucía" del censor que en todo ve pecado u ocasión de pecado. Si bien se reconoce que debe haber normas oficiales en esta material. [...]
- 3) La actitud del padre dominico que se escabulle cuando parece que él, como representante de la Iglesia debía condenar la hipocresía y la mentira.
- 4) Pedro, "símbolo" del pueblo oprimido que muere al fin.
- 5) Velásquez, el procesado, el hombre superdotado, el limpio, el honesto que se rebela sin miedo ante el rey y denuncia la hipocresía de su gobierno y la miseria del pueblo..."⁴³

Cano's report outlines the heart of the social commentary that Buero instilled in *Las meninas*, and his view became the basis for what appears to have been a heated discussion of the junta when they met two days after Cano issued his report. In a document entitled "Impresión de conjunto" submitted by Avelino Esteban y Romero, the reviewing censors revisited the various critical elements of the work, and how to

approach this work as censors. Esteban y Romero makes it clear that for them the problem is to what degree they should recognize the implicit arguments of the play, writing

Reconozco que ‘ver’ las intenciones en una obra teatral se presta a fáciles defensas por parte del autor, que se convierte en acusador, como en la trama VELASQUEZ, contra las interpretaciones de sus cuadros por parte de NIETO...De aquí el que sea muy delicado pronunciarse contra la obra por los motivos reales, disimulados en el parlamento ficticio de los personajes teatrales. Decir que no son ellos los que hablan...sino el autor, puede prestarse a que se diga que son los espectadores, y no el autor, los que ‘oyen’...⁴⁴

Esteban y Romero’s report outlined a long list of pages earmarked for further scrutiny; however the *dictamen final* for the tragedy saw this list radically reduced. Unfortunately, despite having reference to where the censored passages are located, the file for *Las meninas* did not contain a copy of the original manuscript against which these page numbers could be compared, so the nature of what lines were to be cut is not clear. However, Patricia O’Connor’s study of Buero does provide some insight into the nature of these changes. According to her article, most of the objectionable lines and phrases revolved around the negative picture of Spain that the drama projected, particularly those that depicted Spain as brutal or backwards. O’Connor also outlines that many of the lines originally slated to be eliminated were saved as a result of negotiation between the play’s director, José Tamayo and the censors. Tamayo, a major figure in Madrid’s theatrical world, convinced the censors to permit some of the phrases to be allowed. Buero also rewrote certain segments of the play in order to revise some of the more degrading

⁴³ Report by José María Cano dated October 21, 1960 in File C/71715 E 296-60. The brackets written at the end of the Cano’s second point replace page numbers that Cano referred to in the original manuscript, which I chose to eliminate for lack of relevance.

⁴⁴ Report by Avelino Esteban y Romero dated October 23, 1960 in File C/71715 E 296-60.

references to Spain with wording that avoided direct referral to the nation. The end result of these revisions and Tamayo's negotiations was the approval of the work with only minimal changes reflecting the most direct associations made between Spain's decline and the ineptness of its politicians (O'Connor, pg. 285).

El concierto de San Ovidio (1962). Buero's third historical drama, as has already been outlined, is set in France in 1771 during the reign of Louis XV. Different from his other historical works, is not based on a real historical event. Instead, the work simply uses XVIII century Paris as a setting for the action of the play, once again taking advantage of the association of an absolutist monarchy with Franco's regime. *El concierto de San Ovidio* represents another example of Buero's continued concerns with the direction of modern society. At the core of the theme of the play are the parallels between absolutist France and Franco-era Spain relating to the inequities associated with capitalist society, particularly the treatment of the lower class represented by the blind men and the characters associated with Valindin's household. Buero shows through the allegory of the relationship between those in power and those under the influence of that power the inequalities and exploitation that exist in society.

The nature of social classes and empowerment is further enhanced by other elements of the play. The setting of eighteenth century France allowed Buero to explore certain subtle parallels between the nature of Louis XV's absolutist state and the Franco regime. A subtext incorporated into the structure of the plot is the relationship between the pillars of society that form the power structure in both eighteenth century France and Franco-era Spain: the capitalist entrepreneurs, represented by Valindin, that control economic life; the government that controls policy and maintains order, represented by

the police; and the Church, represented by the Mother Superior of the Quince-Veinte, which controls morality. In the play, Buero develops the inter-relationship and interdependency of all three groups in such a way as to show the audience that these forces, despite their distinct self-serving agendas, collaborate to form the power structure of a society with the intent of furthering their own goals. Buero's argument in the play is that the common man becomes the victim of these forces, that by accepting the authority of this power structure, man is condemned to subjugation.

Another subtext Buero presents in *El concierto de San Ovidio* is the use of the police as a tool for political repression. The choice of Paris at the time of Louis XV was again deliberate for it was at this time that Paris established the world's first modern police force. Its incorporation within the context of absolutist France was intentional to exemplify the relationship between wealth and power. In the storyline we become aware of the custom of the rich buying influence with the police that permit for the arrest of personal enemies. This influence, in the form of letters of arrest for sale by the higher echelons of the police, allowed for the repression of the lower classes when they became troublesome. The image of this relationship between the wealthy and the government allowed for the indirect criticism of the Spanish state under Franco, as the police and the wealthy represented two pillars upon which the dictatorship was founded.

Also meshed into the framework of the play was the role of the third pillar of both absolutist France and the Franco regime, the Church. At the beginning of the play, we see how Valindin negotiates with the Mother Superior of the Hospital de los Quince Veinte to enlist her help in convincing the blind beggars to participate in his venture. Through the promise of support of the hospital Valindin convinces her that it would be to all

parties' advantage. What is implicitly projected through this relationship was the Church's passive role of mediating social influence between the institutions of power and the masses.

The two reviewing censors, Gumersindo Montes Agudo and José María Cano, both approved the play. Their reports show that they recognized the general arguments made about power and the treatment of the lower classes, although they found nothing worthy of repression in the pages of the script aside from one line that Cano underlined for what he considered to be an expression in bad taste, which was ultimately conserved in the text. Both censors, however, referred to the demagogic nature of the work in its presentation of the abuses of capitalist society. Cano's report goes further, recognizing that the arguments of the drama are not limited to the context of eighteenth century France, but are applicable to the modern day⁴⁵. Again, just as with *Las meninas*, the allegorical value of the work was not missed by the censors, but rather was understood and accepted, furthering the argument that political criticism was possible provided it was not focused on the regime.

La doble historia del Doctor Valmy (1964; 1965; 1966; 1967; 1975). Buero's most censored play, *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* was submitted to the censors on six different occasions between 1964 and 1967 and each time failed to gain approval for production. Its prohibition was based on the political difficulties that the play's plot and

⁴⁵ Reports by G. Montes Agudo and J. M. Cano, dated November 4 and November 5, 1962, respectively in file C71725 E 287/62. Cano's report expressed a general understanding that an allegorical relationship between the content of the historical drama and modern day society existed. To this end he wrote "Ya en esta línea la obra, aunque su argumento es de vieja época, encierra una fuerte carga intencional aplicable a todos los tiempos, y en conjunto, a mi juicio, a pesar de cierto resabio demagógico, es aleccionable".

theme developed – a condemnation of the use of torture as an instrument of political control. It is also the only play that Buero wrote during the dictatorship that failed to be staged during Franco’s lifetime due to censorship. Given the extensive history and circumstances of this work, this drama will be treated as an exceptional case in Chapter 5.

El tragaluz (1967). Considered alongside *Historia de una escalera* as Buero’s master work, *El tragaluz* is distinct among the overall collection of Buero’s work for several reasons. For one, it is one of the few plays structurally influenced by Brecht’s “V-effekt”, incorporating the previously mentioned omniscient narrators whose appearance serves to underline that what the audience is witnessing is a dramatization of “past” events representative of the greater situation of post-war Spain. *El tragaluz* is also unique in that it is one of the first postwar Spanish plays to directly address the social consequences of the Spanish Civil War, developing both the idea of the loss of a family member during the war (Elvirita, who starved to death as a young child when Vicente left with the family’s only food) and the social and economic disparities that emerged between those who sided with the Nationalists and those who sided with the Republicans. This social message of this work in its time was an extremely powerful one, as the play took to issue the concept that two different Spains, one for the “haves” and one for the “have nots” had grown out of the aftermath of the war. As was discussed earlier in the chapter, the father’s schizophrenic state becomes a symbol for this aftermath, as the death of Elvirita provokes his insanity and unwillingness to become part of the new Spain for what it cost him. His wife, living in self-denial, chooses not to think about the past, and advises Mario to forget what happened in order to move on. Through the different perspectives of the members of the family, what Buero sets out to present is the idea that

the results of the war have produced a society of social and economic inequalities that have only benefited certain segments of society, and not the greater society as a whole.

At the time of my research in the Archivo General de la Administración Civil, the file pertaining to *El tragaluz* was unfortunately unavailable for study as the documents in the file were being restored after having been handled by numerous censors and scholars. Catherine O’Leary’s recent book on the topic of Buero Vallejo however offers significant insight into the issues that *El tragaluz* faced with the censors⁴⁶. According to her study, the censors underlined for suppression a number of phrases. The cited phrases were either references to the Civil War or contained negative commentary of the effects that the war had on the people of Spain in the following years. O’Leary goes on to explain that many of the cited lines were revised, presumably by Buero, in order to gain approval for the work. The final version of the play reflects only two cuts from this amended second draft. The first cut comes in the first act when Vicente tries to convince Mario to come to work with him. Deploring how the economic situation of Spain has created a social divide between those who progressed under the new regime and those who were left behind, he lashes out, saying that those who were left behind found their options limited to being the dregs of society⁴⁷. The second cut was a line from a statement in which Mario admonishes his brother for having abandoned the family during the war, in which he

⁴⁶ O’Leary’s book, *The Theatre of Antonio Buero Vallejo: Ideology, Politics and Censorship* (2005) addresses many of the issues outlined in this dissertation. I only became aware of the existence of this work in November, 2005, as I was in the final stages of writing this text. Given the last-minute appearance of this text, I am unable to address fully the content of her book, however the content of her study has confirmed many of the arguments expressed in this dissertation, and has been helpful in addressing the circumstances of the censors’ review of *El tragaluz*, given that she did see the file pertaining to this work.

⁴⁷ O’Leary reproduces in her book the original text that she drew from the original manuscript. The following is Mario’s original line, with the suppressed text in italics:

blames the events of Spanish history for how their lives turned out⁴⁸ (O’Leary, pgs. 85-87).

With these two cuts applied, *El tragaluz* was approved for performance, and went on to be Buero’s greatest successes. The overall power of this particular play comes from its ability to put into perspective the memory of the Spanish Civil War and examine the consequent effect that the war had on society. What is interesting is that the two cuts were the result not of the references to the war itself, but rather to the social ramifications of the war. The final text of the play does make several references to the Civil War, and it seems that the censors were willing to allow for the drama to address this topic through abstract reference, provided no concrete political opinion was presented that was detrimental to the Franco regime. The suppressions that were ordered and carried out did not reflect the war, but the consequences of the war for many of Spain’s citizens. The eliminated lines represent perceived failures of the regime in establishing a new social order. The first of the two lines points to the malaise and stagnation of segments of the population that found employment or a means to support themselves considered either undesirable (such as living on the dole or prostitution), and in continuation degraded other professions aligned with the regime (the priesthood or the military). The second cut furthers this general sense of the failure of Franco’s Spain, expressing that the war and

“Mucha gente no puede elegir, o no se atreve. *Se encuentra de pronto, convertida en un asalariado, en un cura, en una fregona, en un golfo, en una prostituta, en un guardia*” (O’Leary, pg. 86).

⁴⁸ The unedited text, with the suppressed lines in italics, reads: “La guerra había sido atroz para todos, el futuro era incierto y, de pronto, comprendiste que el saco era tu primer botín. No te culpo del todo: sólo eras un muchacho hambriento y asustado. *Nos tocó crecer en un tiempo de asesinos y nos hemos hecho hombres en un tiempo de ladrones*” (O’Leary, pg. 85). The edited version of the text reflects the elimination of the italicized lines, and its rewording to say “Nos tocó en un tiempo difícil”. For the full text of the revised version, see O.C. I, pg. 1176.

the ensuing government failed to bring civility and progress to Spain, but rather plunged society into a state where success only came with the ability to exploit and manipulate others.

El sueño de la razón (1970) Buero returned to the historical drama a fourth time in 1970 with *El sueño de la razón*. This time, his work centered on the character of the famous artist Francisco de Goya, with the play set in the later years of his life during the reign of Fernando VII. Once again Buero chose a period in history recognized as being a time of political repression and violence with the intent of projecting a view of society that parallels the problems that existed under the Franco regime. The work is set during the terror that ensued after the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy headed by Fernando VII in the post-Napoleonic era. Goya, an old man in his seventies and nearly deaf, is a character that, having lived through the idealism of the Enlightenment and the liberalism that was introduced to Spain during the Napoleonic Wars, is confronted with a society plunged into a new conservatism following the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. The reign of Fernando VII is presented as a time of great violence and suppression, with bands of thugs roaming the streets attacking and killing liberals and those who opposed the monarchy. It is this context that Goya wrote a letter speaking badly of the king and attacking his policies, only to have it intercepted and presented to Fernando VII, infuriating the monarch. Goya's friends and family attempt to convince Goya to beg the king for forgiveness, and then later to flee into exile in France. Their pleas are to no avail as his deafness (physical and symbolic) makes communication with him difficult. As a result of his defiance, conservatives loyal to the king barge into his home, beat the old

man, and rape his housekeeper Leocadia, with whom it is suggested that Goya was involved with romantically.

Again, the work's historical setting was a deliberate choice. Buero developed this work in the era of Fernando VII intentionally for the social and political backdrop that the monarch's rule provided. Considered by history as an ultra-conservative, Fernando VII was intent on erasing the influences of the French Enlightenment that had taken root in Spain during the French occupation and reign of Napoleon's brother, José I and re-establish traditional values and institutions in Spain. Among these measures was an attempt to reassert the power of the crown in the form of an absolutist monarchy, negating the liberal democratic thought that accompanied the French occupation, as well as the Church, whose direct political influence had diminished over the previous decades. The result of the Bourbon restoration was a repressive society ruled through the brutality of military force and the fear of the re-instituted Inquisition. The drama, although careful to avoid direct references to the Franco regime, developed social parallels between the two eras, none of which were lost on the censors that reviewed this work. In the various reports issued on this work, it is clear that there was a critical intent behind the use of the specific time and place of the play, as well as how the plot develops Goya's persecution by the monarchy, although by the criteria established by the *Normas de calificación de obras teatrales* the work was considered permissible⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ The censors recognized the allegory that existed between the work and the realities of the Franco regime. In his report, Bartolomé de la Torre states of Buero's position "El autor aprovecha de nuevo la oportunidad de una circunstancia histórica para exteriorizar sus posiciones", and in continuation suggests that the violent ending of the work is "subversivo". Another censor, Srta. Sunyer, also points to Buero's ulterior message, suggesting that all of the censors recognized the author's intent ("Todos conocemos el intento del autor..."). These two censors were representative of the overall opinion that the reviewing censors took of the work. These reports are located in File C/ 85254 E 259-69.

One of the issues at the center of debate of this work was the historical accuracy of the presentation of the setting, particularly as to how both Goya and Fernando VII were represented. The overall sense of the censors is that the development of the historical context of the work was acceptable, though the concerns about the content of the work led a couple of the censors to scrutinize this aspect, perhaps in the hope of finding justification for its prohibition. One censor goes so far to suggest that the matter be referred to the Royal Academy of History to ensure that the content is historically sound⁵⁰. Another censor, Luis Tejedor, however, accepted the treatment of Fernando VII and his reign in the work, reminding his colleagues that although unkind, Buero's depiction of the time was justifiable:

Si don Francisco de Goya convivió con un monarca atrabiliario y cruel, del que fue víctima, el autor no falta a la verdad cuando pinta el tipo de aquél Borbón. No olvidemos, aunque solo sea a título anecdótico, que Fernando VII es el único monarca de esa familia que no tiene calle en Madrid. Por algo será.⁵¹

The representation of historical circumstances in the end seems to have been accepted by the censors, given that the work was concentrated so much on Goya that no overtly visible parallels were presented, as well as the fact that Spanish history, even as it was taught during the Franco era, did not present the events of Fernando VII's reign in the best of lights. Beyond the critical nature of the historical allegory that *El sueño de la razón* developed, there was one specific element concerned the censors considerably; the presentation of the violent scene where the Royalists break into Goya's home, beat and torture him, and rape Leocadia. Regarding this aspect of the work, the censors were united in their concerns for both the general impact that such a scene would have on the

⁵⁰ Report by Sr. Suevos dated December 2, 1969 in file C/ 85254 E 259-69.

audience, as well as for how these events would be presented. The staging for this scene in the play called for the brutalization of Goya to be seen, but for the rape of Leocadia to take place out of sight behind a sofa. The final report for the play allowed for this scene to be conserved, but stressed the need for a careful observation of the play by the attending censor to ensure that the scene did not offend public decency. Despite the political and visual concerns that *El sueño de la razón* presented for the censors, the work was approved without any cuts, with the only stipulation for its production being that the final scene be monitored to ensure that no indecent acts were performed on stage⁵².

Llegada de los dioses (1971). Buero returned to the modern day in this work, writing an anti-war drama tackling the topics of nuclear annihilation and the crimes of war. The plot of this play centers around Julio, who is blinded for reasons that the doctors cannot understand. He goes to a beach resort with his girlfriend Verónica and his father, Artemio. As the play progresses, it becomes understood that Julio's blindness is the result of learning that his father had been a Nazi during the Second World War, and that the horror of the realization that he had committed war crimes provoked Julio's condition.

Llegada de los dioses simultaneously deals with the past and the potential future of war on Earth. The revelation that Julio's father was a Nazi served to provoke the worst memories of war in man's history, while the subtext of the nuclear accident off the coast of the beach resort serves to remind us of the dangers related to life in the nuclear age. In tandem, these concepts both serve to remind the spectator of certain realities of society in 1971: the fact that Spain was still ruled by a military dictatorship, that Spain was a

⁵¹ Report by Luis Tejedor dated December 2, 1969 in file C/ 85254 E 259-69.

⁵² *Dictamen final* issued on December 10, 1969 in file C/ 85254 E 259-69.

member of NATO in the midst of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, and that the dangers of the arms race extended beyond nuclear war into the dangerous realm of nuclear accidents that accompanied the proliferation of atomic weaponry. This last point was a topic subtly addressed in the play through indirect references to the accident near Palomares, Spain⁵³.

The censors did not object to the anti-war position that the drama took, but rather to certain references that could serve to tie Spain to the arguments. Unfortunately the censors' reports for this play were missing from the files in the Archivo General de la Administración Civil, but the original script was still available in the file, with the censors' recommended cuts underlined in red pencil. Through a comparison between these underlined passages and the final published script, we can see that a few lines were altered from what Buero had originally intended the audience to hear on stage. In one of these scenes, the censors took issue with a passage that Julio utters about the military (the brackets are mine, representing the lines that were suppressed):

Julio: Pero hay locos...y el temor los multiplica...[Y una legión de generalotes en todos los países, convencidos de que el estado perfecto del hombre es el de combatiente...] Y también hay accidentes. [Cerca de aquí ya hubo uno. Hasta el ministro se bañó en el mar para demostrar que la irradiación no afectó al agua... Los irradiados de tierra no pudieron bañarse con él: estaban hospitalizados.]...⁵⁴

⁵³ On January 17, 1966 a U.S. B-52 Bomber crashed off the coast of Palomares, Spain while attempting a mid-air refueling. The plane, carrying four thermonuclear weapons, went down into the Mediterranean Sea with its weapons. Three were recovered shortly after the accident, though it took nearly three months to find the fourth. As a result of the detonation of the conventional detonators of two of the weapons, an area around Palomares was contaminated with plutonium dust, forcing the destruction of crops and livestock in the area. See Scott D. Sagan's book The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons, pg. 178 for more information.

⁵⁴ Original manuscript of *Llegada de los dioses* located in file C 87864 E 687-78.

In these lines, the censors were presented with a text that presents two problems. The first was the suggestion that fear had created a militaristic society motivated by irrational aggression, which set the stage for a future war. This line, under the *Normas sobre calificación de obras teatrales*, would have been interpreted as a direct attack against the military and would be suppressed on those grounds. The second part of this passage alludes to the events near Palomares through the reference to the minister swimming in the waters near the site in order to reassure the public that the area was safe. This was a reference to Manuel Fraga's visit to the Palomares site shortly after the accident. At the time this area was being developed as a beach resort for foreign tourists. In order to reassure both the local public as well as the rest of the world, the Spanish government went to the extreme of sending Fraga, then the minister of Information and Tourism, to Palomares where, in a photo opportunity for the international press, he went swimming with the U.S. ambassador to Spain in the waters of Palomares's coastline. The criticism made in Julio's statement plays directly to this event, which led to the call for the line to be stricken from the final text.

Above and beyond these direct references linking Spain to the criticism of war, the rest of Buero's anti-war message was conserved in the text, as was the subtext that Julio's blindness was the result of a psychosomatic illness resulting from the discovery that his father had participated in Nazi atrocities during World War II. The fact that the lines referring to the father's Nazi past were left untouched by the censors is somewhat surprising, given that the Franco regime was at one time sympathetic to the Nazi cause during the war. Although Buero made no attempt to link Spain to the Nazis in the work, older members of the audience would have remembered Spain's wartime past, making it

unusual that the censors would not have been as concerned about this association, as they had been when considering the allusions to Mussolini in *Aventura en lo gris* nearly twenty years earlier.

Besides the elimination of lines tying Spain and its military to the pacifist stance of the work, the other element of the work that the censors required to be revised were stage notes that they considered to be too risqué for public consumption. These notes elaborated the movement and positioning of the characters of the play. The first, which we already have discussed in Chapter 2, was a reference to Verónica, Julio's girlfriend, in which she was described as being "[r]eclinada en el sofá con las piernas entreabiertas, Veronica muestra la laxitud posterior a la entrega amorosa" (O.C. I, pgs. 1382-1383). In Act II, a similar stage note describing Julio's father, Artemio, was included in the original manuscript reading "Matilde avanza al primer término y tras ella, como un animal ansioso de copula, asoma Artemio...". The first of these stage notes was conserved in the published version of the play, but the second does not appear. At issue for the censors was more the visual aspect that these stage notes would take on when performed than the words in and of themselves. The second example does not appear, probably because the overly erotic language used in the description did not add to the actual direction of movement, probably leading to its elimination for not contributing anything the censor felt was of value.

The lack of the censors' reports on this play unfortunately denies a window to their interpretation of this play. Based on the manuscript on file and the comparison of the underlined passages with the final approved text, it is safe to assume that the two issues that the censors had with the overt political references and sexuality were

permissible with the revision of these passages, and the work was in the end staged in the Teatro Lara in Madrid on September 17th, 1971 (O.C. I, pg. 1338).

La Fundación (1974). As we have seen, Buero addressed a topic rooted in an experience of his own life: the issue of imprisonment and the death penalty. Inspired by the years immediately following the Spanish Civil War, when Buero was imprisoned and condemned to death, *La Fundación* represents one of Buero's most psychological dramas. Despite the powerful themes this tragedy embodies, the censors had only specific concerns about this play. Their reports show a clear recognition of the political message that the work was intended to express, and yet they were willing to allow for the overall theme of the work given that its theme did not ground itself in a specific place nor include references that would tie the events of the play to the Franco regime. Surprisingly, some of the reviewing censors went so far as to praise the work, with one going as far as to refer to it as an "obra de gran categoria" despite the critical nature of the play ⁵⁵.

Ultimately, the censors were willing to approve this work with only modest changes. The crux of their concerns came from a scene at the end of the play when one prisoner, Asel, was taken away, presumably to be executed, provoking the other prisoners to call the guards "asesinos". No direct justification for the cut of these cries was given in the reports rendered by the censors, although the intent no doubt was to avoid a correlation between capital punishment and murder. Other minor cuts were also called for, including one line uttered by Asel discussing the nature of being a political prisoner. In the original text, the script called for Asel to say "te condenan tribunales secretos por

el delito de resistir en tu propia nación invadida”⁵⁶. This line was cut, no doubt because of how it planted the idea that secret tribunals were used in the judgment of political prisoners, as well as for the definition provided for what a political prisoner constitutes. Both references ultimately hit too close to home, given that such trials took place under the dictatorship for “enemies of the state”, among whom Buero was once counted.

The other condition for the work’s authorization was that the staging of the drama be done in such a way that no allusion to Spain’s government be projected. The concerns that were expressed in the overall judgment of the reviewing committee was the potential that uniforms and other symbols might be incorporated into the stage production that might provide for an approximation between the events onstage and the state of political prisoners of the regime. To this end they stipulated:

Es condición fundamental que la puesta en escena (montaje, vestuario, etc.) mantenga una absoluta inconcreción acorde con la universalidad “deseable” para el tema propuesto, y la generalidad de su plantamiento. El propio autor califica su obra como una fábula en un país imaginario, o desconocido, y esto es fundamental, por lo que la realización juega aquí un papel importante y ha de atemperarse a los condicionamientos que expresamente señaló⁵⁷.

With only these minor changes and the recommendation that the premiere be closely observed to ensure that no visual aspect of the work related the events of the play to the dictatorship in any way, the censors approved *La fundación* for production⁵⁸.

Despite censorship, Buero was able to stage nearly all of the works that he wrote during the dictatorship. By working within the limits of the acceptable, Buero was

⁵⁵ Report by Sr. Zibiaurre dated March 30, 1973 in file C 85495 E 145/73.

⁵⁶ *Dictamen final* issued June 23, 1973 in file C 85495 E 145/73.

⁵⁷ Letter dated May 8, 1973 in file C 85495 E 145/73. This letter outlines the *pleno*’s overall judgment of the play.

⁵⁸ *Dictamen final* issued June 28, 1973 in file C 85495 E 145/73.

extremely successful in consistently staging works throughout the course of the Franco era with only a certain amount of interference from the regime's watchdogs. What we can see from the overall history of his theater with the censors is the success of *posibilismo* as a means to develop scripts that were able to pass the standards of the censors and still conserve message and context that allowed for Buero to express thought that took to issue relevant moral, ethical and social issues, including many of the political problems stemming from the dictatorship.

From the overall responses of the censors throughout the course of Buero's work during the dictatorship, we can draw a few conclusions about how *posibilismo* as an approach to writing was successful. What the overall documentation shows is that the level of suppression of the lines that Buero wrote were relatively minimal, even in the more provocative works that characterized his theater in the 1960's and 1970's. It is clear that the censors were aware of the indirect messages that Buero incorporated into his works, but because in many cases the arguments were generalized and not in direct conflict with the regime or its ideologies, they were not repressed. In many cases, Buero's success in the development of plots and dialogs that addressed social topics relevant to the situation of post-war Spain resulted from the universality of the messages of his plays.. Even works such as *El tragaluz* and *Llegada de los dioses*, although set in Spain, were permissible because the content and ideology behind these works, despite their social intents, expressed criticisms of society that did not place blame on the regime. This was the principal value of the open ending. The lack of a direct correlation between the problems of society and the government is what made these works acceptable for staging under the norms of censorship.

The censors did have a greater degree of concern about the messages that the historical dramas set in Spain reflected on the regime, its government and its society, both past and present. These concerns stemmed from the presentation of historical fact, as well as the allusions that these works made to the present. The way the censors seemed to approach Buero's historical dramas was based first on the play's loyalty to historical fact, and then centered on how the presentation of events was contextualized to reflect on the present. Certain references, such as the mention of the Pardo in *Un soñador para un pueblo*, were problematic as a result of the implied connections that such references made to the Franco regime. Other cuts were motivated by the protection of the image of Spain. Based on the *tachaduras* cited in *Un soñador para un pueblo* and *Las meninas*, we can see that many of the changes that censors called for were motivated by nationalism and the desire to preserve an idealized image of Spain's past glories, rather than to focus on its decadence and social problems, especially when social stagnation is associated with governing institutions such as the monarchy, the nobility or the Church. What allowed for the approval of these historical works in the eyes of the censors was the fact that Buero kept the arguments focused on the moment of the play, and mostly avoided references that would serve to tie the works' actions to the present through the dialog.

In certain cases where his works approached topics considered too sensitive to the addressed in a setting in Francoist Spain, Buero sidestepped an approximation of the problem as a national issue by setting the work in a place other than Spain. In the case of *El concierto de San Ovidio*, Buero uses the backdrop of eighteenth century France to frame a comparison of how the pillars of society in both the past and the present interact to control the masses in order to further their own causes. The setting of *La fundación* in

an unnamed, fictional country served to distance the arguments against capital punishment from leveling a direct comparison of the drama's intent to criticize Spain's history of imprisoning and executing political prisoners. In both of these cases the plays were approved for performance not because their arguments didn't pertain to events under the regime, but rather because their arguments did not focus their themes on events occurring in Spain.

Although Buero created plots and dialog for his works in ways that would not overtly tie the themes and critical nature of his works to the dictatorship, he incorporated other elements that would serve to enhance the works' impact on the audience. The use of blindness and deafness in several of his plays provided additional impact to the dramatic presentation of many of his works, and also added symbolic value to the overall nature of the dramas' arguments. Settings, such as the school for the blind in *En la ardiente oscuridad* or the metamorphosis of the backdrop of *La fundación*, used lighting and staging to enhance the symbolic values of the themes of the works and add to the immersion effect that drew the audience into the story and allowed them to sympathize with the characters. This personal association again was crucial to the conveyance of social argument since Buero's open endings left interpretation of the play to the viewer, permitting him to leave unsaid that which he was unable to say as a result of censorship.

Despite his best efforts, Buero was not able to say everything that he intended to express in his plays. The elimination of specific lines in the works that Buero succeeded in staging during the Franco years were motivated either for concerns about how they tied the drama to the regime or for violation of public decency. Given that Buero, through his "posibilist" approach to writing, went to lengths to avoid text that the censors would find

overly radical, the level of suppression of his works was ultimately minimal in comparison to other, more provocative playwrights such as Sastre. The lines that were cut from the final version of his plays were the result of either reactions that Buero could not foresee or, possibly, they were reactions to elements he added in order to probe the limits of what he could include in a script without incurring censorship. Throughout the course of his work under censorship, Buero pushed the envelope with each successive play, taking on more problematic themes with each new work. As a result, many of his later plays appear to have received more scrutiny than his earlier works, in part because thematically the plays he wrote in the latter years of the dictatorship addressed topics that more directly related to the political situation of the Franco regime. The elimination of these lines did not distort the overall plot or theme of his works, explaining why Buero was willing to accept these changes. Sastre's assertion that this constituted a conformist posture seems unfounded, given that the overall arguments of Buero's dramas were not altered as a result of these changes. In certain cases, through his directors, Buero was able to control the changes made to the text of his plays, finding a common ground that would conserve the context of the play while using language deemed acceptable to the censors.

Despite the limitations imposed by censorship, Buero was highly successful in staging nearly all of his works with only modest changes. He was not, however, categorically successful, as a few of his works did encounter significant obstacles and were prohibited in their time. In the next chapters we will look at the problems that three of his plays had with the censors and discuss the limitations of *posibilismo* and focus the cases where his works were not successful in obtaining the approval of the censors and, as a result, prohibited.

Chapter 4: Buero's censored plays

As we have seen, much of Buero's success in staging his works under censorship was the result of his ability to frame the themes of his works in such a way that social criticism was expressed either within the parameters outlined in the *Normas sobre calificación de obras teatrales* or on the margin of these norms. His intuition about the criteria under which the censors operated allowed him to develop scripts that required little to no revision in order to gain approval for their staging. The intuitive understanding that represents the success of *posibilismo*, however, was not absolute, given the degree of subjectivity involved in the censorial process. This subjectivity was a factor that Buero could not plan for, since the censors' interpretations of the guidelines of censorship as well as their personal reception of the scripts they reviewed were grounded in the individual political, social and moral opinions of the functionaries charged with reviewing a work. Other factors, such as the social and political climate of the time that the works were submitted, also weighed on a decision to approve or deny a work's production. These factors influenced the manner in which the censors approached each work, and while most of the plays that Buero submitted to the censors ultimately were approved, there were cases when the objections of the censors were serious enough to call for the outright prohibition of some of Buero's works. Of the 20 plays that Buero wrote during the Franco era, only three were ever prohibited from being staged at any point: *Palabras en la arena*, *Aventura en o gris*, and *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*.

Each of these works was suppressed at one time or another, though each for different motivations and under distinct circumstances.

The first of these censored plays, *Palabras en la arena*, represents one of Buero's earliest works. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, this work was initially performed in 1949 when it was submitted to a contest sponsored by the Asociación de Amigos de los Quintero, which Buero won when the audience voted the play the winner of the competition. *Palabras en la arena* is a unique piece in the context of Buero's career as it contains characteristics not found in his other works. For one, it represents his only one-act play. It also represents his only work inspired by a biblical story. The core of the plot is an extrapolation of a parable contained in the Book of John (8.1-15). The original story as presented in the Bible takes place on the Mount of Olives where Jesus went to teach. It was there that the Pharisees brought before him a woman accused of adultery, and told him that by the laws of Moses that she should be stoned. The Pharisees then asked what Jesus thought. The biblical passage that follows outlines what would become the crux of plot of the drama:

This they said to test him that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, 'Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her'. And once more he bent down, and wrote with his finger on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away, one by one... (Holy Bible, John 8.6-9).

Buero used the parable as a point of departure for his drama with the intent of further developing the arguments of sin and punishment that the biblical story was intended to communicate. Buero intended for his play to take the parable to a new level, focusing on the public willing to condemn the adulteress to death by stoning. Focusing on

the image of the words Jesus wrote in the sand, Buero wrote what he described to be “[u]na tragedia en la que las palabras de Jesús – como las un día escuchadas por San Pedro o Judas -, no vulneran el libre arbitrio de los personajes, que construye por sí mismo el destino de cada cual y la enseñanza que pueda depararnos” (O.C. II, pg. 320).

The plot for *Palabras en la arena* begins where the story in the Book of John ends, extending the parable by exploring the reaction to Jesus’ sermon from the point of view of the citizens of Jerusalem that were passing judgment on the adulteress. The biblical story was indirect enough as to reference to what was written in the sand as well as how it applied to the Pharisees that Buero, in constructing his drama, could make full use of his imagination in developing a plot and conflict for the characters and their own sins. Buero’s drama presents the story of Noemí, who is secretly having an affair with Marcio, a Roman Centurion. Her husband, Asaf, a local policeman, returns home to tell Noemí of the events at the Olive Mount, followed shortly thereafter by several of his friends who were present at Jesus’ sermon. Throughout the course of the play, they debate the merit of the accusations leveled against the adulteress as well as the words that the prophet wrote in the sand. Their conversation devolves into an accusatory exchange, with each character describing what was written in the sand of another in order to avoid attention to their own alleged sins. One by one the words in the sand associated with each character becomes known through the discussion: of Eliú, a scribe, was written “Ladrón de los dineros de los pobres”; of another man, Gadi – “corruptor de niñas”, with reference then made to his treatment of an orphan girl. Another man, Matatías is labeled a “hipócrita y lujurioso”; Joazar, a priest, laughingly admits to what Jesus wrote of him: “ateo”. The attention of these men then turns to Asaf, whose epitaph in the sand is still

unknown as they had not seen what Jesus wrote of him. When asked, Asaf claims that what was written of him was inconsequential and that he had already forgotten what was said.

Noemí, absent throughout the course of this discussion, returns just soon enough to learn of her husband's opinion supporting the stoning of the adulteress, leaving her in fear for her life. After his friends leave, he admits to Noemí the truthfulness of the descriptions made of his friends by Jesus, confessing that at points he had to restrain himself from laughing as the prophet humiliated his friends by demonstrating their flaws to the public. As the action continues, Asaf eventually learns of Noemí's infidelity. Enraged, he backs Noemí offstage from where the audience hears her screams as Asaf kills her, resulting in the return of the other characters. The play ends with Asaf telling them that what Jesus wrote in the sand for Asaf was correct; he had written "Asesino".

While the Bible doesn't identify the exact words that Jesus scratched in the sand, nor develop in any detail the reactions of those that read the words beyond a few nondescript lines, *Palabras en la arena* offers a logical continuation to the biblical tale. Buero capitalized on the open-ended language of the parable to construct a script that developed the adulteress's accusers as characters with personality flaws that give depth to the argument that all people are sinners and are not entitled to act as jury and executioner. The moral failings of Buero's characters, as defined through the words in the sand, ultimately serves to underscore both the flaws that each person possesses as well as the hypocrisy of the moral superiority they assert in rendering judgment on others.. It is in the development of the accusers that we find the modern message of *Palabras* – the nature of crime and punishment, a theme of personal importance to Buero given that he

had been imprisoned for seven years following the defeat of the Second Republic.

Through this drama Buero took to issue the nature of justice as administered by those in authority and the severity of the punishments being issued. Ultimately his view of justice does not differ from that of the biblical passage upon which the play is based. Both texts argue for compassion and clemency in the treatment of the accused. Both texts also point out that those who were the accusers were also guilty of their own sins and were not morally superior to those they accused, although Buero's drama develops this aspect of the story in much greater detail.

When it was completed, *Palabras en la arena* was submitted to the censors for approval, which was required even for private stagings such as in the case of its 1949 debut for the Asociación de Amigos de los Quintero. File 71.418 (83/51) N. 433-49 located in the Archivo General de la Administración Civil del Estado, devoted to *Historia de una escalera*, also contained documentation for the submission of *Palabras en la arena*⁵⁹. The first *dictamen* filed for the 1949 performance was particularly short and lacking in criticism. Surprisingly, the evaluation contained positive comments about the work's aesthetic qualities, leading to the drama's approval without suppression⁶⁰. This was followed three years later by a petition for a second presentation of the play in Zaragoza, which was also approved by the Dirección General in 1952. As was the case

⁵⁹ The fact that the documentation for *Palabras en la arena* was located in this file is rather unusual. Normally a file is issued for each individual play. In searching the catalogs of the Archivo General de la Administración Civil del Estado, the file number for *Palabras en la arena* is identical to the file number of *Historia de una escalera*. That both plays were contained in the same file was by design and not by error. The only plausible explanation for this is that both plays were submitted at around the same time and for reasons unknown it was decided to file them together.

⁶⁰ Report dated September 21, 1949 (author's name impossible to distinguish due to quality of signature).

with the initial submission, there was no significant comment by the censors other than a standard authorization by the Secretary General of the committee⁶¹.

If these two submissions had been the only attempts to perform *Palabras en la arena*, this work would not have merited any significant mention in this study at all. However, when submitted again in 1958 for a public performance in Barcelona during the week of Easter, the fate of this work took a very different turn. Under the norms of censorship works must be submitted every time they are to be performed, even if they had been previously approved, such as in the case of the 1952 production of *Palabras en la arena* in Zaragoza. In a report dated March 26, 1958, the censor, Avelino Esteban Romero, expressed hesitations about the production of this work during religious celebrations due to Buero's reworking of the biblical parable at the core of the plot. This report, highlighting the play's subtitle as a "Drama bíblico en un acto", begins with a heading stating "Informe moral sobre la obra". In his report, Romero cited that although there were no evident biblical errors nor anything blasphemous in reference to Jesus, he believed that Buero was taking liberties with his dramatization of the biblical scene that were inappropriate. His impression of the work was that it lacked in spiritual effect, saying that "no se sient[e] afirmación doctrinal alguna sobre Él". In continuation, Romero summarizes his overall judgments of the play:

No sabría concretar el por qué, pero no me gusta este drama, menos para días de Semana Santa, ya que a la sombra de un hecho evangélico, su trama se limita a presentarnos un caso de adulterio... Como se desprende, la trama solo es para

⁶¹ Letter dated November 27, 1952 from the Secretario General [de la Junta] to the Delegado Provincial de Información y Turismo de Zaragoza. As this was a communication between the Dirección General de Cinematografía y Teatro and a regional office, there is no guarantee that this performance actually occurred as regional authorities did have authority to cancel a production if it was deemed necessary, though it is most likely, given the approval from Madrid, that this petition was ultimately approved at the local level as well.

mayores. Pero me gustaría que se consultase a otro Vocal, a ser posible, sacerdote, uniendo mi voto al que éste formule sobre esta obra⁶².

No additional documentation exists to prove that Romero's suggestion of a second review by a priest was acted upon. For lack of further documentation, it can only be assumed either that a clergyman was consulted informally or that no such consultation was ever made. Either way, the day after Romero filed his report, a final *dictamen* was issued prohibiting this specific production of the drama from being performed. In the ruling, it was explained that even though the work had been previously approved, the decision to deny this particular performance was based on its appropriateness for staging during *días santos*, or holy days. This judgment was somewhat unusual, as it did not preclude the possibility for later productions during times that did not conflict with a religious holiday, but at the same time addressed the moral and religious concerns about the play's production during Easter. What this represents is a situational censorship based on unique circumstances of the work, showing that the censors could and did reverse themselves on occasion if the context and timing of a work's production could potentially prove morally or politically inopportune.

Another factor that may have contributed to the decision to deny the 1958 production was the public nature of the performance. When the work was originally evaluated in 1949 it was approved without any cuts and praised for its quality both by the censors as well as the Asociación de los Amigos de los Quintero. This first performance was in the context of a limited performance before a theatrical society, falling under the category of *teatro de cámara*, meaning that a production was staged for a private

⁶² Report by Avelino Esteban Romero dated March 27, 1958.

audience on a limited basis. Normally productions of this type were intended for specific audiences, such as a university production or for a theatrical society such as the Amigos de los Quintero. Although works presented under this category technically had to pass the same censorial standards as works performed for the public, some degree of leniency in terms of theme and plot was permitted as these works were not viewed by the general public but rather by a limited number of members of Spain's intellectual and theatrical community.

The initial petition by the Asociación de los Amigos de los Quintero was for a performance that would have been categorized as a production for *teatro de cámara*. The *dictamen* that the censors issued in 1949, however, did not stipulate that the presentation was limited to a performance for *teatro de cámara*, so it can be assumed that when the decision was rendered that the intent was that the work was acceptable for public performance. The 1952 petition for the staging of *Palabras en la arena* in Zaragoza, being only an internal letter between a central headquarters and a field office, did not elaborate as to whether the performance was for a general public or for a limited audience such as the 1949 production, making it impossible to know for whom it was performed and under what limitations it was placed.

The petition filed in March 1958, however, was for a public performance at a time of religious festivities. At issue for the censors (perhaps forced to reflect on the circumstances as a result of Romero's report) in responding to the request for this production was how average citizens would receive this play in the context of Easter celebrations. From the point of view of the regime, reconsideration had to be given due to how the play's extrapolated interpretation of a biblical story would be received by the

general public, as well as how this story could be conflictive with Catholic orthodoxy. This reconsideration hinged in great part on how the work was described in Romero's report. Romero's assessment offered a very limited description of the work, focusing on Noemí's adultery and completely ignoring the issues of mercy and crime and punishment that both the play as well as the original biblical story attempted to present. If such a decision to prohibit the play's representation were made solely on the content of the report, then Romero's unflattering characterization of the plot would have made this work unappealing for public viewing during *Semana Santa*.

The striking difference in the results of the petitions filed in 1949 and 1958 shows that the process of censorship is founded in the interpretation processes of the individual censor and the circumstances present at the time of a work's submission. Romero's interpretation of the play also shows that an individual reader of the Dirección General de Cinematografía y Teatro, in writing a synopsis of a play, was capable of influencing change of a play's status. Romero's interpretation can be viewed as rather one-sided as he focused his attention on specific points of the play. That certain aspects of a work, such as adultery in the case of *Palabras en la arena*, would become the crux of a summary to the exclusion of other elements suggests that the censor at times focused on a specific element of a storyline that they found concerning. It seems that at times the readers built their analyses of the works around what they saw to be the most problematic elements in the text rather than a holistic interpretation. By issuing a report that gave a less than complete view of a work, the individual censor, when presenting it for judgment for approval, could ultimately influence a prohibitive judgment.

Other circumstantial factors above and beyond a work's timing, such as the case of the 1958 petition for *Palabras en la arena*, can influence a decision to permit or prohibit a play's production. In the case of *Aventura en lo gris*, we find that problems with arranging for production as well as the nature of the political atmosphere of the time could influence how a work was received by the censors, and that a change in those circumstances, conversely, would make a work acceptable for production.

Aventura en lo gris, carrying the subtitle "Drama en dos actos unido por un sueño increíble", is set in modern times in the fictional country of Surelia, a country recently invaded and conquered by an unidentified foreign power. At the beginning we find Golver, the former head of state of Surelia, and his wife Ana at the door of an inn, attempting to flee the country. Here they encounter Silvano, a history professor ousted for opposing the old regime, asleep in a chair. As Golver and Ana establish themselves in the inn, a young couple, Albo and Isabel, arrive, also in search of escape. Isabel brings with her a baby, which we learn is the product of her rape by a soldier of the invading army. These characters are then joined by the sergeant, who brings news that the train station is abandoned and that they should not expect escape by rail. His arrival is shortly followed by the arrival of Lidya, a wealthy woman whose car has just run out of gas. All of the characters have the same intent – to escape from the advancing army.

The second act – the "sueño increíble" – opens with an altered set, creating a surrealistic ambiance. The dream, presented as a representation of the characters' subconscious desires and ambitions meshing into an interactive scene, serves to project the individual motivations of each character and how their individual interests conflict. Their actions ultimately demonstrate their sins and character flaws: lust, greed and a

desire for control of the group are all expressed in their discourse, all of which is directed toward Silvano, who, as the protagonist, has attempted to keep all of the conflicting motivations in check in order to ensure the welfare of all of the characters. By the end of the dream, the characters begin to focus on Isabel, who they see as a drain on their resources. In this dreamlike state, Albo, tired of caring for her, kills her.

Act III opens the next morning when Silvano and Golver find Isabel dead, strangled to death. As the other characters learn of her death, the subconscious traits of each character presented in the previous scene begin to manifest themselves in their conscious actions and words. As they debate and accuse one another, Albo returns, and informs the others that he is the one that killed Isabel, acting out of jealousy, as she refused to love him and focused her attention on her baby. However, as Albo recounts the means by which he killed Isabel, it becomes clear that he himself is not completely conscious of the events, that he is in fact recalling the collective dream of the previous night in which all of the characters except Golver participated. It's ultimately learned that Golver was responsible for Isabel's death, as he saw her and the baby she carried as an obstacle to the group's ability to escape the advancing army. When this is learned, Carlos kills Golver. With no train coming they begin to plan their escape on foot.. Silvano then tells them that he will stay behind with the baby, as the child is the one that deserves to be saved the most given his innocence and that as the father was an invading soldier, he believed that the enemy would care for the child.

Out of love and the freedom Silvano gave her, Ana begs Silvano to come with her, or at least to turn Golver's body over to the enemy to save himself. When he again refuses to flee she stays with him as the others flee. Shortly after the departure of the

other characters a group of invading soldiers arrives, find the bodies of Isabel and Golver, and then come across Ana and Silvano. They beg the soldiers to take the baby to safety, trying to convince them that the child is innocent and the son of one of their comrades. They reject this at first, denying that their own soldiers would be capable of rape, but after an impassioned denunciation of the horrors of war, Ana convinces them that saving the child is the moral thing to do. With the baby safety secured, the soldiers turn their attention to Silvano and Ana, the play ending with their impending execution⁶³.

When submitted to the censors for the first time in December 1952, the drama was received by its first readers with few problems. The first report, filed by Bartolomé Mostaza, qualified the play as good and complements Buero for his poetic abilities in the development of the dream, although he questions the coherence of the third act. Stating that the work presents no religious or political difficulties, Mostaza approves it for production⁶⁴. The second report, filed a month later by G. Montes Agudo, is considerably less complementary of the play. In his comments the priest qualifies the work as “confusa [y] dislocada” in the coherence of the plot. He goes on to criticize Buero for the disunity of the play’s structure. Despite what he considers “defectos” associated with Buero’s writing in general, Montes Agudo summarizes his analysis by stating that the play does not pose any risk, political or moral, to the public and gives his nod to its production⁶⁵.

⁶³ The synopsis provided here is based on the 1955 publication of the text, as well as on the original manuscript submitted to the censors. The final version, as explain later in the chapter, reflected some degree of modification, including significant revision to the dream sequence in Act II as well as changes to the names of certain characters.

⁶⁴ Report by Bartolomé Mostaza dated December 2, 1952.

⁶⁵ Report by G. Montes Agudo dated January 12, 1953.

Although in its initial review by the censors it did receive approval, the drama's status suffered a more serious problem. The company that had originally agreed to stage the play decided to back out, leaving the work's fate in limbo. As a result of the play's loss of a producer, the original petition to the censors was voided. Years later, recalling the events that followed this cancellation, Buero explained that "[d]urante los años iniciales de mi vida profesional ofrecí el drama a varias compañías, sin que ninguna decidiese a estrenarlo" (O.C. II, pg. 435). The playwright solicited several companies to produce the work, eventually finding one that would take on the project but later abandon the project when producers expressed concerns about what they considered to be flaws in the script.

The problems with *Aventura en lo gris* seemed to stem from how producers received the script. They were apprehensive about backing the play both because they were concerned about the work's financial viability, but also at issue were the subtle political overtones expressed in a work dealing with the presentation of a country ravaged by war. Buero, still tinkering with the script, made a few changes and went out once again in search of a company willing to produce his work. In February 1953, another company finally agreed to produce the work and submitted its petition to produce *Aventura en lo gris*. When the censors reviewed the text in November of that year, their comments and criticisms were more extensive and scrutinizing. The review of this petition was made by a total of five censors, including Mostaza and Montes Agudo, who were evaluating the work for a second time. The first of the reports for this petition was filed on November 11, 1953 by E. Morales de Acevedo. On a literary level Morales de Acevedo expressed concerns that the work contained an "[e]xceso de preocupación e

influencia de lecturas teatrales extranjeras”. What he meant by this is unclear as he did not elaborate, but in the context of Spain in the early 1950’s, a nation still culturally disconnected from the rest of the world for ideological reasons, it can be assumed that in this statement he was suggesting that certain liberal thought not in line with the regime’s conservatism was at issue. He goes on to question under the heading “Valor teatral” how this work would result if staged, limiting himself to comment that it would depend upon how it was staged as to if it would be a good work or not. In his overall judgment of the work, he paints a rather gloomy picture of the work in terms of its presentability, stating that the work is a

[p]intura trágica de las pasiones humanas en unos supremos momentos. Obra insincera, muy trabajada y pretenciosa, escrita al modo de la nueva e incoherente literatura mundial. Pretende ser simbólica y está llena de afectación sin gran valor en la entraña. Los efectos escénicos sirven para disfrazar el leve contenido⁶⁶.

Despite this rather negative depiction of the drama’s qualities, he does acknowledge Buero’s ingenuity in the conception of the dream sequence, and applauds the work’s intention as a statement against the horrors of war. Even with all of the unflattering points he noted, Morales de Acevedo does judge the work as acceptable and approves it for representation.

The next two reports are also approbatory in their evaluation of the text. Montes Agudo, giving his second report, refers most of his comments to the report he filed a year earlier. He does however add an additional paragraph to his report that puts the play’s plot into a new light.

Leída esta obra, por segunda vez, nos atenemos en todo al dictamen que en su día no mereciera, en sentido aprobatorio. Nos vemos detenidos especialmente, en la

⁶⁶ Report by E. Morales de Acevedo dated November 11, 1953.

consideracion de posible referencia política, que existen evidentemente – por clima, situacion y dialéctica se sugieren las horas postreras de Mussolini – pero esta adecuación es hábil, contenida, como si el autor “temiera” las consecuencias de una encubierta animosidad. Elude situaciones que inicialmente debieron haber sido consabidas, cuida los vocablos y salva así nuestros reparos, aunque no consiga nuestra ingénua ignorancia⁶⁷.

Montes Agudo’s report exemplifies one of the key problems facing works that are submitted more than once – the possibility that additional scrutiny may result in a censor finding additional motives for suppressing a work. Having read the drama twice, Montes Agudo found new meaning in his second evaluation that he had not mentioned in his initial appraisal of the play. However, despite the comparisons made between Golver and Mussolini, Montes Agudo once again approved the work for production, stating that the comparison, although potentially visible, was not concrete or negative enough to be of concern .

His report was followed by another report issued by Padre Mauricio de Begoña. The report of this censor, a priest, can be viewed at as an example of the failures of bureaucracy for its lack of effort and information. In the first page of the report only one word was used to describe the work’s content: a qualification of the play’s plot as having been *expuesto*, or already stated, signaling that he deferred to the summaries offered by his colleagues. The remainder of this censor’s report offers little else of value, only a few brief sentences adding his approval of the play to the reports already issued⁶⁸. This lack of comment on the part of Father Begoña raises the question as to how well some of censors actually performed their tasks, as they seemed to be willing to allow their

⁶⁷ Report by G. Montes Agudo dated November 14, 1953.

⁶⁸ Report by R.P. Fr. Mauricio de Begoña dated November 19, 1953.

evaluations of the works they reviewed be swayed by their colleagues, possibly resulting in a superficial review of the text.

The next report, made by Francisco Ortiz Muñoz, was also short and refers back to plot summaries made by other critics. In his overall criticism of the work, however, he differed with the members of the committee reviewing *Aventura en los gris*, taking on a much more critical tone in his interpretation of the work. His position, succinct in its phrasing, was to find the script "...confusa, triste, escéptica y pesimista. No se percibe claramente la intención política del autor. Estimo que la obra no interesará al público"⁶⁹. In issuing such a judgment, Ortiz Muñoz, through his comments, took on two different roles. The first was that of a censor, forming an opinion as to whether a drama met the standards set forth by the regime in terms of acceptability. To this end he expressed his uncertainty and concerns with the political position of the author. It seems, however, that Ortiz Muñoz made a jump beyond the role of a censor to that of a drama critic in stating that the work would not be received well on the stage. This statement, relative to the other documentation relevant to Buero's career during the dictatorship, is unique in that here we see a censor transcending beyond the role of a judge of the work's political and ideological viability to being a judge of what an audience would or would not like.

Ortiz Muñoz also differed from the other censors because he was the only one of the five *vocales* that actively called for the suppression of certain phrases from the text. In his citation of the cuts he did not justify his call for their removal. The phrases themselves were not mentioned in his actual report; but were referenced by the page numbers corresponding to where the text in question was located in the original

manuscript submitted to the Dirección General de Cinematografía y Teatro. The underlined phrases Ortiz Muñoz highlighted corresponded mostly to the erotic comments made by both Ana and Lidya in the dream sequence of Act II.

The final of the five reports came one again from Bartolomé Mostaza, who deferred most of his comments back to his first report from the previous year. In an additional comment to his original report, he added that he thought that the changes made by Buero since the first submission in 1952 did improve the play. He also responded to the criticisms made by Ortiz Muñoz concerning the elimination of phrases marked by the latter critic. Mostaza, although recognizing why the cited phrases could be morally questionable, defended their inclusion, arguing that their inclusion added to the aesthetic quality of the work. In the end, under the *tachadura* section of the report, he cited some (but not all) of the lines previously mentioned by Ortiz Muñoz, emphasizing that their elimination was not absolutely necessary⁷⁰.

The end result of the opinions of the five censors was that all five approved the work for performance, with only Ortiz Muñoz actively (and Mostaza, perhaps passively) calling for minor changes to be effected to the text in order to eliminate the erotic dialog from the dream in Act II. Given that the *vocales* reviewing *Aventura en lo gris*

⁶⁹ Report by Francisco Ortiz Muñoz dated December 7, 1953.

⁷⁰ Report by Bartolomé Mostaza dated Dec. 15, 1953. In this report he defers much of the commentary to his earlier report (see note 6) although he does respond to changes made by both Buero since the first submission as well as recommendations for cuts. In his report he states: "Me remito a mi anterior informe. Añadiré que la obra gana con la emienda, a tinta que ha puesto el autor. ...En cuanto a las tachaduras, a lápiz puesto por otro lector, entiendo que moralmente pueden suprimirse, pero en lo estético hacen que el diálogo mejore, al podarlo de soflamas políticas". In continuation, he cites under *tachaduras* "Aunque no sean precisas absolutamente, 49, 56 del acto primero y 6 del acto segundo". His qualification of these cuts as not being absolutely necessary is the result of his reading of the play in light of the suppressions already suggested by Ortiz Muñoz.

unanimously allowed for the production of the work to go forward with only some revision, one would think that the play's future would be assured. However, in a unusual turn of events, the final decision of the drama's fate resulted in just the opposite decision. In a letter from the Head of the Theatrical Section to the Director General of the Dirección General de Cinematografía y Teatro, the head of the Theatrical Section recommended prohibition of the work. The letter, counter-signed by the Director General, Alonso Pesquera, concurred with the recommendation by responding to the report "De acuerdo con el informe de la Sección"⁷¹.

Why this surprising decision was made is unclear. As all five of the readers had given their approval to the work, with two suggesting some cuts, it is puzzling that the final recommendation from the Head of the Theatrical Section would be for prohibition of the work. The section head ignored the consensus of the committee reviewing this play and made a unilateral decision contrary to their conclusions. What motivated him to rule against the advice of the censors is unfortunately unknown, as no justification appears in the documentation. Some speculations of the reasons behind the prohibition of *Aventura en lo gris* have been put out over the years. In her article on the censorship of Buero Vallejo, Patricia O'Connor has suggested that the plot of the drama, above and beyond the condemnation of war, too closely approximated the circumstances of the flight of Benito Mussolini and his mistress as they tried to escape Italy for exile in Switzerland during World War II. In its depiction of Golver and Ana attempting to escape from

⁷¹ Report from Head of Theatrical Section to the Director General of Cinematografía y Teatro dated January 5, 1954. Unfortunately the name of the Head of the Theatrical Section is unknown, as the only documentation referring to him contains only his illegible signature.

Surelia, parallels between Golver and Franco's wartime ally are somewhat apparent in the development of the nature of Golver's flight from the country and the presence of certain items such as posters depicting the leader (O'Connor, pg. 284). In light of Montes Agudo's second report, this is a possibility, although O'Connor most likely did not have the benefit of reading this report at the time she wrote the article in 1969. What is difficult to grasp, though, is why, if a symbolic representation of Mussolini was indeed present in the character of Golver, would Montes Agudo judge the character acceptable? Again, as personal interpretation and reception was a variable in the censorship process, Montes Agudo's evaluation of the work shows that although he was conscious of the presence of this allegorical association between Golver and Mussolini, he did not find it troubling enough to suppress the drama, perhaps for not recognizing a political problem with such an association. The section head, however, may have perceived the parallels as being more insidious and politically motivated, leading him to go against the recommendation of the *vocales* and overturn their decision.

A second possible explanation is that the section head, upon reviewing the reports, saw the events of the drama as hitting too close to home. Robert Louis Sheehan, in his article on Buero, developed in some degree of detail the parallels between the events in Buero's *Surelia* and the circumstances of the Republican flight from Spain at the end of the Spanish Civil War. In his study, Sheehan outlined several comparisons of Buero's work with historical events. For one, the plot focused on the flight of individuals who prospered under the old regime (personified by the characters Golver, Ana, and Lidya) to a neutral country. This mirrored the events of some Republican leaders who fled Spain for France at the end of the Civil War, in cases taking fortunes abroad with

them as they encouraged their soldiers to keep fighting the Nationalist forces. Sheehan also put forth other, more subtle comparisons between the text and the Civil War. One item which he pointed to is the decor at the onset of the play's first act, where on a wall we see a propaganda poster saying "Combatienetes de Surelia: ¡Ni un paso atrás!", reminiscent of the Republican slogan "No pasarán". Also, he argued that a parallel existed between Silvano's criticism of the war in Surelia being a product of foreign intervention, just as the Spanish Civil War was influenced by foreign powers on both sides. Sheehan's conclusion was that the work was ultimately interpreted as a veiled criticism of the Civil War and censored on those grounds (Sheehan, pgs. 127-128).

Sheehan's assessment of this motivation for the censorship of *Aventura en los gris* is well founded, and has also been cited by Luis Iglesias Feijóo as a possible motive for the work's suppression (pg. 143). Buero, in a response to a survey conducted by the journal *Primer Acto* many years later, also suggested that the overall treatment of war, as well as the more specific parallels between the Spanish Civil War that Sheehan suggested, may have been a factor in the decision to prohibit the play. When asked about the reasons for prohibition of this work, he speculated "Tal vez el carácter crítico de las reminiscencias que en [la obra] pudieran verse de nuestra guerra, o de la guerra mundial" (O.C. II, pg. 463). This assessment by Buero offers credence to the arguments put forth by both O'Connor and Sheehan, since both the references to Mussolini as well as the association made between the Spanish Civil War and Buero's fictional war could have been perceived as problematic to a zealous censor concerned with the political ramifications of a play.

Regardless of the motivation for the drama's prohibition, the circumstances behind the decision to suppress *Aventura en lo gris* show that, despite the approval of five different censors, the work was ultimately prohibited as a result of the decision of one individual, the section head. This exemplifies how the formal procedure for evaluating and judging theatrical works could be and was abandoned when circumstances or the personal interpretation of the censors' superiors conflicted with the judgment of the *vocales*. The rules set out by the Franco regime regarding censorship, although specific in some cases, were in other cases left open-ended so that the censors' recommendations could be overturned if their superiors perceived moral or political problems in a work that were not addressed in the evaluation process. The process of censorship, even after their codification and reform under Manuel Fraga in 1963, allowed for the possibility for a committee's decision to be overturned by the section head or his superiors. The intent of this was to create a safeguard against works that might have fallen through the cracks. Essentially this was a tool that allowed for the formal process to be abandoned in cases where formal procedure might have failed to address contents of a work that were ideologically problematic. Furthermore, prior to the reforms of the process instituted by Fraga, the censors and their superiors were not obliged to explicitly document their motivations for censorship, which explains the lack of explanation for *Aventura en los gris*'s prohibition in 1954. For these reasons, we cannot know with complete certainty what the exact motivation for the work's repression was, though the arguments put forth by O'Connor and Sheehan give strong credence to the explanation that its prohibition resulted from the historical parallels that existed in the work.

Aventura en lo gris, at this point with no possibility of being performed for the public, did not lay dormant as a result of its failure to reach the stage. At around the same time that a final decision was being weighed for its performance, Buero published the play in the theatrical magazine (*Teatro* 10, January-March 1954). This was followed a year later with its publication as a book by Ediciones Puerta del Sol. The text of the 1955 version reflected the limited cuts that Mostaza recommended, though did not go as far as to address the longer list of cuts that Ortiz Muñoz called for. What is interesting is the circumstances leading up to the publication. At the time of the work's first publication in *Teatro*, Buero submitted a lengthy prolog to the magazine in which he announced his reasons for publishing the play rather than representing it on stage. The existence of the prolog, written in late 1953 *prior* to the final decision of the censors, suggests that Buero had already accepted that the work was not going to be approved. In the article he announced that the work, not bad but not excellent by his own description, was being published rather than performed due to various problems the author had in finding a company willing to produce the work. He stated that he had offered the play to five different companies, which either rejected the play or accepted the work out of courtesy, only to later decide not to pursue its production (O.C. II, pg. 372).

After its publication, Buero put *Aventura en lo gris* aside for many years and went on to write and stage several other dramas. Although he had moved on to other projects, he always felt that the work was incomplete and could be improved. Feeling that the work deserved a better life than the limited publication in which it existed, Buero went back and reworked the text in an attempt to improve it, with the hopes of seeing the play make it to the stage in its revised form. In 1963 Buero revised the play, conserving

the general plot of the work, but also making several significant changes. For one, he changed the names of three of the characters; Golver was changed to Goldmann, Albo became Carlos, and Lidya was renamed Georgina. Why Buero was compelled to make these changes is unclear, although Sheehan speculates that the move from Golver to Goldmann, a Jewish surname, may have been motivated by Buero's desire to confuse the censors, as history had never seen a Jewish dictator, only victims (Sheehan, pg. 127). Buero also made some adjustments to the plot as he rewrote *Aventura en lo gris*. For one, he rewrote Goldmann's initial scene with Silvano in order to create a greater level of mystery and suspense as to Goldmann's true identity. Also, Albo, now Carlos in the later version, was redefined as being somewhat mentally unstable, further developing his role for when he supposedly killed Isabel in the dream. Other changes included more tension concerning the Campesino's sack of food as well as a rewording in the dream sequence to make the erotic overtones less provocative (Iglesias Feijóo, pg. 145). The end result of these revisions not only succeeded in improving the dramatic tension and quality of the work, but also made the social messages of the play both more subtle and yet more powerful.

When the play was resubmitted to the censors in 1963, Buero encountered far less resistance to the message of the play. Of the three censors reviewing the drama, none were among those who read the play some ten years before. With a new committee reviewing the text, *Aventura en lo gris* was approved by the censors without any cuts whatsoever. Only one of the three censors expressed any concerns for the political message of the drama, suggesting that the escape of Goldmann could raise certain vague questions about the nature of power and leadership, but he ultimately qualified them as

anecdotal and approved the play for staging. When the final decision was passed along to the upper echelons of the censorial hierarchy, the play was this time approved by a different section head, as well as the Director General and, finally, Manuel Fraga, who by this time had become Minister of Information and Tourism. In their decision, they approved the work, only requiring a thorough, though common, *visado del ensayo general*, the infamous monitoring of the performance, in order to assure that the revamped dream sequence would be acceptable in moral terms.

When *Aventura en lo gris* finally opened in 1964, it was received quite badly by the critics. Among the attendees to the premiere was none other than Manuel Fraga, the Minister of Information and Tourism. Fraga's reception of the play mirrored that of the critics, as his only reaction to the work was to write in his memoirs "Asisto al estreno de una de las obras menos importantes de Buero Vallejo, *Una aventura en lo gris* (Fraga, pg. 86). In the end, the play was not a financial success. The production of *Aventura en lo gris* only ran for little more than a week before closing, representing the shortest run of any of Buero's commercial works. Despite its failure at the box office, this play can be viewed as a personal triumph for Buero. Buero succeeded in overcoming his single greatest brush to that date with censorship and ultimately saw the work performed.

Around the same time that Buero had triumphed in staging *Aventura en los gris* following years of its prohibition, he began to write another work that would come to be his most conflicted and problematic script submitted to the censors, *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*. Originally written in 1963, this drama explores what may be the most sensitive topic Buero ever undertook to bring to the stage during the dictatorship— the use of torture and brutality by police in the modern era. One would expect that the subject of

this play would automatically spawn a swift and harsh response from the censors, but as we will see, it surprisingly passed through a long period in limbo before being censored, only to open in Madrid for the first time in 1976. Even then, thirteen years later, the production was, as Carlos Álvarez characterizes it “con cierto riesgo porque, aunque ya se había realizado la sustitución en la Jefatura del Estado, todavía no se había iniciado lo que se ha dado en llamar ‘la transición’” (Álvarez, pg. 27).

La doble historia del Doctor Valmy represented Buero’s single-most provocative work to date. We have already seen certain details relating to the symbolic and structural characteristics of this play in Chapter 3. However, in order to better understand some of the censors’ problems with this work, it would be useful to summarize the general presentation of plot and theme of the work in order to understand the issues that the censors had to grapple with. The play is once again set in Surelia, the same imaginary country used for the setting of *Aventura en lo gris*. Rather than the recently invaded country of his prior play, Surelia is now depicted as a nation with a new government trying to maintain control in the face of “subversive” threats. The play is initiated by an introduction by the two omniscient (and insane) narrators already discussed. From this introduction the action transitions to the office of Dr. Valmy, a psychologist who indirectly describes himself as a mediocre researcher as he dictates a book he is writing to his secretary. Having finished the first part of a case study he is writing, the *primera historia*, he begins to narrate the second part of his book. This second part, *la doble historia*, serves as a narration for the action of the play, as the action of the play consists of flashbacks to which he alludes.

From Valmy's narration we are introduced to the two main characters of the play, Mary and Daniel Barnes, a young, married couple. We come to learn that Mary, a former schoolteacher turned full-time mother, has a passing acquaintance with Dr. Valmy. Through this acquaintance Daniel is sent to Valmy for therapy for a psychological disorder, impotence caused by the emotional stress of his work. Daniel works for the Political Section of the National Police where he is employed as an interrogator who uses torture to obtain confessions. As the play progresses the nature of Daniel's work is developed through the introduction of several characters. His boss Paulus, is the head of the Political Section and an old flame of Daniel's mother. Daniel's colleagues Luigi, Pozner, Dalton, and Volski are also introduced, representing the police. Also in the office is Aníbal Marty, a dissident who is being questioned. Later at home, Mary is visited by Lucila, a former student and the wife of Aníbal Marty. Lucila comes to Mary asking for help in gaining the release of Aníbal, knowing that Daniel works for the Political Section of the National Police. Mary, unaware of the true nature of Daniel's work, rejects her accusations until Lucila admits that she too had been tortured by Daniel's department. Lucila then departs, leaving Mary to question the validity of Lucila's accusations. Her suspicions are furthered by the arrival of a mysterious book, "Historia breve de la tortura", which Mary reads. At the end of Act I Mary confronts Daniel about his activities in the Political Section, describing what she has learned from the book, citing the graphic nature of how violence is used for political purpose, including the torture of children. Daniel admits to his involvement in torturing suspects and promises to resign from his job in order to save their marriage.

Act II opens in Paulus's office with Daniel requesting a leave of absence from his work, which Paulus denies. Paulus then insinuates that for Daniel to give in to his weaknesses would be self-destructive as he could ultimately come to be seen as a subversive for not carrying out his duties and become a prisoner himself. Daniel then arrives at Dr. Valmy's office, expanding on the conversation, explaining that Paulus once had an amorous relationship with his mother, but that eventually she had left him to be with Daniel's father. Some time later, years after Daniel's father died, Paulus re-emerged, taking on a paternal role to Daniel, culminating in his entry into the National Police. Later in the act, Mary has a powerful nightmare in which she imagines her son being emasculated with a pair of scissors held by the Grandmother. This nightmare provokes fears that Paulus's control over Daniel will reproduce itself in Danielito and the cycle of torture will continue. This fear is augmented by the reappearance of Lucila the next morning, who informs Mary that Aníbal had died as a result of torture.

In order to save himself, Daniel returns to Paulus and asks for a transfer to the Foreign Service and, after that request is denied, threatens to quit. Paulus offers Daniel an open-ended possibility for a transfer on the condition he returns to work. The hope of escape, although tentative, alleviates Daniel's impotence, and he returns home to Mary only to find that she now lives in terror of what her husband represents. She is intent on leaving him and taking Danielito away. A fight ensues, and Mary shoots Daniel with his own gun and is subsequently arrested. The play ends with the Grandmother holding the baby and singing to him, leaving the baby's future in question as the possibility exists for history to repeat itself.

With this synopsis in mind, it is clear that a core issue for the censors was the work's presentation of torture as a tool of political control. This was compounded by the time in which the play was written. The genesis of *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, which Buero began writing in 1963 and completed in 1964, coincided with a period of strikes and protests by miners in Asturias. O'Connor wrote that following these strikes, the newspapers of Spain published an open letter, signed by Buero and some 100 other intellectuals, which asked for an investigation of "claims by striking miners that some of them and members of some of their families had been tortured, mutilated, and killed by police" (O'Connor, pg. 286). The play that was generated out of the ideas of these events presents the basic concepts behind the miners' charges; torture, abuse, and rape were used as tools by the police in order to obtain confessions and simultaneously punish those that the police saw as "subversives".

The tragedy that Buero Vallejo initially submitted for representation to the Titular Teatro de la Comedia in 1964 was entitled *La doble historia del Doctor Varga*, which submitted the play to the censors for approval. The company's petition never received a response from the authorities, resulting in its abandonment of the project. A second company then stepped in and expressed interest in producing the play. The script was submitted again to the censors. This second company did not receive an official response either, but was informed unofficially that it would be approved if certain changes were made by Buero Vallejo. In an interview published by Antonio Beneyto, Buero outlined the requests made by the censors:

Hubo lentos forcejeos verbales respecto a: 1.º cambio de los nombres, ya extranjeros, por otros que lo fuesen aún más claramente – lo que efectué, por considerarlo conveniente -; 2.º supresión de frases, algunas referentes al órgano

sexual de un niño de pecho, que no quise tachar; 3.º supresión de dos escenas, al principio y hacia el final de la obra, que entendía yo imprescindibles...y sospecho que los censores también, y que no me aviné a sacrificar. Total: punto muerto, sin prohibición ni aprobación (Beneyto, pg. 24).

The file located in the Archivo General de la Administración Civil in Alcalá de Henares provides a lengthy and detailed account of the play's history, although certain materials were missing from the file⁷². This documentation identifies in more specific terms the nature of these revisions. The first three *informes* written on the drama, all dated July 28, 1964, outline some of the basic difficulties that the censors had with the play and would continue to have for more than a decade. The first of these, written by Padre Luis González Fierro, characterized the play as an “[o]bra que trata un tema difícil, el de la impotencia y sus causas y el de la tortura policiales por razones políticas”⁷³. That González Fierro would highlight the topic of impotence in the play is somewhat curious, as this only represented a subtext of the plot. His report reflected a moral perspective, focusing on the taboo issues surrounding sexuality, which was consistent with the role of priests as censors under the dictatorship, as their primary function was to monitor moral and ethical consideration in the plays they examined. Under the section of *Advertencias* in his report González Fierro summarized his reservations about the drama as being “[u]na general: y es que eviten en lo possible toda referencia insistente, en palabras y

⁷² File C 71.779, 147/64. Among the documents missing were the original script and, it seems, a *dictamen definitivo* prohibiting the play in 1966. Two letters, one issued in 1966 and another issued in the 1975 review of the play refer to the issuing of a *dictamen final* in 1966 prohibiting production of the work by Nuria Espert's company. No copy of the *dictamen* is in the file to corroborate this statement. I suspect that a *dictamen* was submitted to Manuel Fraga but was never acted upon. A final *dictamen* does exist for a petition by the Ismael Merlo-Vicky Lagos Company dated March 13, 1967, nearly a year after this missing *dictamen* was to have been issued. If a *dictamen final* had been acted upon in 1966, it is logical to assume that Buero would not have submitted the play for representation by Ismael Merlo-Vicky Lagos without having altered the text per the censors' demands.

⁷³ Report dated July 28, 1964 written by González Fierro.

situaciones, a la impotencia, aunque sé que no pueden escamotearla”⁷⁴. The suppressions he suggested corresponded to either explicit references to impotence or allusions to the dismemberment of the baby Danielito in Mary’s dream. The other two initial reports, written by Bartolomé Mostaza and José Luis Vázquez Dodero, pointed out another central concern that the censors had with the drama, that of a perceived association between the plot and events taking place in Spanish society. Both censors specifically pointed out that the names originally used for the characters in the first draft of the play *La doble historia del Doctor Varga* were Hispanic, provoking a subconscious association between the characters and events in Spain⁷⁵.

The Junta, during their meeting on July 28, 1964, rendered a decision for approval of the play for adults over 18 years old, provided that certain cuts and changes were made. The cuts corresponded to the two key themes: the most explicit references to impotence and Daniel’s sexual practices and elimination of all references to the torture and deformation of the baby Danielito from the text. It was also stipulated that the names of all of the characters and places in the play must be modified in order to remove any trace of Hispanic resonance⁷⁶. This judgment contextualizes the changes that Buero cited in his interview with Beneyto. The first of the censors’ concerns is that of the names of

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Reports by Bartolomé Mostaza and José Luis Vázquez Dodero, both dated July 28, 1964.

⁷⁶ Report by the Junta de Censura de Obras Teatrales dated July 28, 1964. In this first review of the play by the censors, the initial points of contention with the play’s content were summarized by Padre Fierro as follows: “Condición previa par expedir guía a) extranjerización de los nombres de los personajes b) Quedan con exactitud la fecha de su estreno para decidir una vez en posesión de este eleto sobre la procendencia o no de otorgar la documentación. Adaptaciones: No se expedirá guía de censura hasta conocer la fecha de su estreno para decidir una vez en posesión de este eleto sobre la conveniencia o no de otorgar la documentación dada las características de la obra en relación con su posible negativa interpretación en el caso de coincidir su estreno con atentaciones y condenas de extremistas o autores de atentados. Será en suma condición previa indispensable antes expedir autorización la extranjerización de los nombres de los personajes”.

the characters. As Buero pointed out in his interview, he was willing to comply with the use of foreign names to further distance the action of the drama from Spain. In the preface to his edition of the play, Álvarez explained that the initial title at the time of the play's first draft was still undetermined, as it was necessary to “modificar el apellido del doctor al encontrar el suspicaz de turno que Barga tenía resonancia hispánica...” (Álvarez, pg. 27). Buero Vallejo vacillated in choosing the name of the title character, assigning him surnames including *el Dr. Parma*, *el Dr. Varga*, and *el Dr. Walmy* before finally settling upon *el Dr. Valmy* for the name of the character (Iglesias Feijóo, pg. 320). In order to further distance the characters from any association with Spain, Buero would change the names of many of the other characters so that they would take on a foreign, non-Hispanic nature. The two main characters, Daniel and Mary Barnes, both took on English names. Many of the secondary characters were also renamed to distance their personalities from the Spanish language: Luigi (Italian), Pozner (German), Dalton (again English), and Volski (Russian). Whether these were the names that Buero Vallejo had originally chosen when penning the first manuscript of the play is unclear as the first manuscript of the play is unavailable for consultation, but these are the names that appeared in all subsequent editions.

Even the use of the name Surelia for the setting of the play was questioned, as the nature of the name – *Sur*-elia – evoked for a Spanish speaker thoughts of a southern country. One censor, in a later report on the play, went so far as to say “[E]l nombre del país –Surelia- pues aunque creemos que en Nortelia o Centralia se dan más estos casos

sería mejor que no se jugase con ningún punto cardinal y se diere un nombre totalmente neutro”⁷⁷. Buero’s use of the Surelia since the earliest draft of the play demonstrated that he had intended to distance the plot of the play from a direct association with Spain. As he has successfully used this name before in *Aventura en lo gris* without question, it is almost surprising that such a comment would emerge in the reports. Geography, it seems, was even an issue for the censors when it came to establishing distance of plot and theme from Franco’s Spain, although this one comment serves more to exemplify once again the subjectivity of the censorial process.

The second point Buero mentioned in his interview with Beneyto was that of certain phrases and sentences referring to a baby’s genitals and the imagined violence towards the baby Danielito. Here, Buero was less willing to make adjustments to the text of his drama, as he saw this element of the work essential to the overall plot of the play, as well as crucial to the emotional impact that he was attempting to provoke. Although in their review the censors were willing to allow for the inclusion of much of the scenes of torture relating to Anibal Marty, they had more difficulty accepting the mere notion of torture being applied to a child, even if it were only through reference and not visual presentation. Even here, the censors showed a degree of willingness to allow for certain associations to be made, provided that such references to the torture of children were universal and somewhat innocuous. One such example that was left untouched by red pencil was the final scene of Act I. After reading the copy of “Breve historia de la tortura” that she received in the mail from Lucila, Mary becomes conscious of the horrors

⁷⁷ Report by S. Bautista de la Torre dated October 27, 1964.

with which her husband has associated himself. The result of this awakening leads her to confront Daniel and attack the use of torture, which climaxes with her explanation of how babies fared in concentration camps:

Mary. – ¡Sacrificaban niños en la gehena! ¡Los quemaban vivos!

Daniel. - ¡Mary!

Mary. - ¡Mientras tocaban un gran tambor para ahogar los gritos!

Daniel. - ¡Cálmate!

Mary. - ¡Ah! ¡Para ahogar sus gritos!

Abuela. - ¡Mary, hija!

Mary. - ¡Cómo gritarían! ¡Cómo gritaría ese niño que desgajaron por las piernecitas, en un campo de concentración! (Alvarez, pg. 100)

The images of torture and dismemberment of children in this scene were surprisingly permitted, perhaps because the association was in reference to the atrocities of Nazi Germany, and did not represent an allusion to events having (at least knowingly) taken place in Spain. Although the public would have found Mary's assertions unsettling, it is safe to assume that the audience would not have drawn a parallel between a universally known event such as the Holocaust and a use of torture by the Franco regime. This scene set the stage for the images that are later developed in the second act relating to the sexual mutilation of the baby Danielito in Mary's nightmare. The nightmare – a subconscious product of the book that she read - began: "Mi suegra entró con el niño, pero ya no era niño..." (Álvarez, pg.112). This first statement presented a powerful image in the minds of the audience as to the nature of the dream alludes to a sexual mutilation of the baby, of his emasculation which we eventually learn was produced by Daniel. The ideas of torture associated with this scene were further heightened by references to instruments employed in this barbaric act: scissors, electric shock, and the amputation of fingers.

In his interview with Beneyto, Buero expressed his refusal to edit these lines from the text of the play, but upon reading the text one does not find them to be a direct reference to a child's sexual organs, but rather an implied one. It is understandable why the censors objected to this scene and equally understandable why Buero Vallejo refused to cut it out of the text of the play. Mary, as a resident of Surelia, now is in fear for the safety of her child as she faces the reality of what her government potentially can do to its citizens, creating an implicit association between the action of the play and Spain. This particular scene presented a powerful visual image of the brutality associated with torture. Although nothing presented on the stage visually presents these images, the audience is led to imagine in graphic detail what was to have transpired in the dream. The image of the baby – symbolic of innocence – being tortured would open the public's mind to the possibility of the torture of other innocent victims. Although the first citation mentioning the concentration camps would have had a far more limited context, essentially in reference to Nazi Germany, the images developed in the dream were open ended and universal, allowing for the possibility for a connection to be drawn between the scene and the application of torture elsewhere, including Spain. The censors' reservations about this scene no doubt were the result of the both how the imagery would impact an audience as well as the potential political concerns that these images could raise.

Buero's lack of willingness to come to an accommodation with the censors about the presentation of this scene stemmed from his convictions and, most likely, personal experience going back to his years as a political prisoner. He expressed a great passion for the fight against torture throughout his career, which would be reflected later in other

works (most notably in *La fundación*). By not compromising with the censors on this particular cut, he reiterated his commitment to seeing the use of torture banned. In his short essay “Nunca más torturar”, he offered what is probably the best summary of his motivation for the inclusion of these scenes:

Que nadie ignore lo que sucede; que nadie cierre sus ojos y sus oídos ante el horror de las siniestras oficinas donde ciertos amantes padres de familia e ilusianados novios de lindas señoritas destrozan a otros padres, hijos, novios, o novias” (O.C. II, pg. 1284).

He also added to this later in the same essay “...pensemos que nuestros hijos pueden ser un día torturados, o, lo que es peor, torturadores” (pg. 1285), reminding us that future generations could end up becoming either the victims or the victimizers if the cycle of torture is left unchecked.

With these thoughts in mind, we can go back to these scenes and consider Mary’s reactions. In the first act she became aware of the true nature of her husband’s work, and initially fell into a state of denial as to the horrors he deals in. As she became conscious of what occurs in her husband’s office, she moved past her denial and into a state of recognition of the atrocities that Daniel commits in his work. The crimes that Mary cites from her book “Breve historia de la tortura” affected her subconsciously and provoked the nightmares she recounted to Dr. Valmy. The dream represented an awakening of her conscience in which she complied with the desires that Buero Vallejo expressed in “Nunca más torturar”; that she realized that her loving husband was in effect a man that “destroza[] a otros padres, hijos, novios, y novias”. Danielito’s appearance in the dream served to augment this argument, reminding the audience both of the horrors committed against innocent victims and of how the children of Spain or any other society could

grow up to become a victim or a torturer. To have cut these scenes from the play would have sharply limited the impact of Buero Vallejo's message upon the audience and have hindered the overall presentation of this theme in the play.

The third objection Buero identified in his interview with Beneyto - the elimination of two key scenes – would not emerge until later, and was not mentioned in the initial reports filed in July, 1964. As a result of the first two problems the play had with the censors, Titular Teatro abandoned its attempt to produce *La doble historia del Doctor Varga*. A new company, Empresa García Escudero shortly thereafter stepped in to produce the play. In hopes of receiving a favorable *dictamen* quickly so production of the play could go forward, Alfonso Paso, who had been brought on board as art director by Empresa García Escudero, wrote a letter to Manuel Fraga, communicating the difficulties and confusion the company had as a result of the censors' silence regarding the play:

Se me ha anunciado que hay en la obra leves tachaduras y algunos cambios de nombres propios. Como es muy posible que la obra estrene a mediados de octubre en Barcelona y con toda seguridad en Madrid en enero, tendría que disponerme a ensayar dentro de un breve espacio de tiempo. Así pues, me urge la emisión del oportuno cartón de censura y por lo tanto que Vd. o la persona que a ello esté destinada en estos instantes, nos informan con la urgencia necesaria de las pequeñas correcciones de que se habla...⁷⁸.

Paso's letter went unanswered, and it appears that the play suffered an administrative silence in that it was neither approved nor denied for production by Empresa García Escudero. Given that at this point only weeks had passed since the initial denial of the Titular Teatro's petition and that the play was still titled *Doctor Varga*, it was possible that the silence was for lack of an edited script or that the censors were hesitant to act. Either way, the project was once again abandoned.

When the play was resubmitted in October 1964, now under the title *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, yet another company, la Compañía de Ramón Clemente, had stepped in to try to produce it. Alfonso Paso, once again contracted as art director, wrote a second letter, this time to the Director General of Cinematography and Theater asking for expediency in permission to perform the play between January and March 1965⁷⁸. The reports submitted by the censors on the revised, re-titled version of the play shows that although Buero had complied with the first request - the use of non-Hispanic names - the second request for the removal of phrases discussing Daniel's impotence had not been completely fulfilled. Furthermore, the censors, in their reports on the resubmitted text, now point to additional concerns not voiced in the earlier review of the play. Fierro and Mostaza, in their second reports on *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, amended their first recommendations for changes of the text. Specifically they called for the elimination of two dialogs, one at the beginning of the play and one towards the end, between the two omniscient narrators. These scenes involving the Señora and Señor represented the third and final element Buero Vallejo signaled as having prevented the staging of *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* in Spain. At issue was how the incorporation of their dialog marked the overall content of the play. At the beginning of the play, the narrators explained themselves as having already heard the story the audience is about to witness, informing the spectators that what they were about to experience was most likely an untrue story completely removed from reality:

Señor: ...Si sucedió algo parecido no fue entre nosotros. Esas cosas tal vez pasen, si pasan, en tierras aún semibárbaras...

⁷⁸ Letter from Alfonso Paso to Manuel Fraga dated August 4, 1964.

⁷⁹ Letter from Alfonso Paso dated October 3, 1964.

Señora: En algún país lejano.

Señor: Permanezcan, pues, tranquilos, ya que la historia, probablemente falsa, nos llega además de otras tierras y no nos atañe⁸⁰.

In the opening scene, these two narrators added the distancing effect by informing the audience of the probable falseness and irrelevance of the subsequent plot to the audience. Their short qualification of the events of the play attempted to distance the message of the drama from reality. This distancing effect continued beyond their introduction through the narration provided by Dr. Valmy during the course of the play. Valmy's character, who described himself as "un prácticón que comete frecuentes errores y que también ha logrado aciertos repentinos por fiarse de su intuición" (Alvarez, pg. 66) was on the surface introduced as a source of questionable information. Through the incorporation of Valmy's dubious interpretation of events, Buero Vallejo projected doubt into the minds of the audience so that they would not accept his account of the story as fact, but rather biased observations.

The narration that these three characters provide throughout the play was meant to provoke a psychological approximation between the spectator and the plot of the drama. Despite their denial of the likeliness that the events of the drama represented real events, the incorporation of these characters in fact served to highlight that such events had and were still taking place. The ultimate intention of this psychological game was to bring the audience to a point where they would begin to implicitly relate what they saw and experienced with the recent events that had taken place in the aftermath of the Asturian strikes. The intervention of the Señor and the Señora near the end of the play furthered

⁸⁰ From list of *tachaduras* attached to censors' reports dated October 27, 1964.

the ironic relation between plot and reality, once again reminding the public of the association of the events of the drama with the dictatorship:

Señora: (*su acento, como el del SEÑOR, trasluce una disimulada turbación*) ¿Es que quiere destrozarnos los nervios con sus relatos inverosímiles?

Señor: Nos obliga de intervenir de nuevo.

Señora: (*al público*) No le hagan caso, amigos míos. Ya le dijimos que la historia es falsa.

Señor: Y si ocurrió algo parecido, no fue tan espantoso. Ya sabemos que, alguna vez, hay quien se excede... y quizá se le escapa algún cachete...⁸¹.

This second intervention, interrupting the action of the play at the crucial moment before Mary's final resolution of her conflict with her husband's participation in state-sponsored torture, served to crystallize in the public's mind that such events did in fact occur in many countries, including Spain. The perspective of these narrators, as we have already discussed in Chapter 3, came into question with the entrance of an orderly who hurriedly rushed them offstage. The validity of their denial that the events of the play had ever occurred anywhere was instantly negated when it was perceived that the narrators themselves were insane. Through this manipulation of perspective, Buero created a dialog that served to deny the possibility of state-sponsored torture and yet simultaneously reaffirmed the existence of such practices by destroying the credibility of the characters responsible for its denial. By highlighting the narrators' credibility in this way, Buero ultimately achieved the effect of provoking the audience's further contemplation of the actions of the play and how torture indeed existed both abroad as well as in Spain.

The censors, upon further scrutiny of the play in their re-evaluation, most likely perceived this intention of the narrators' lines, leading for them to call for revisions not

mentioned in their initial reports. The elimination of these passages would have altered the context in which Buero's arguments were framed, essentially eliminating text that was key to producing an immersion effect. For these reasons, Buero was resistant to making the changes that were suggested. The importance of these new cuts, as O'Connor's study correctly points out, was that the modifications being suggested by the censors would have had the result of "eliminat[ing] certain characters, thereby making the play the "simple" rather than the "double" story" (O'Connor, pg. 286).

Beyond the elimination of the Señor and Señora characters, additional new suppressions were cited by most of the censors that reviewed this play, many of which related to the ironic distancing effect Buero was attempting to achieve and the issues of impotence and the presentation of torture in the play. The overall opinions of the censors were mixed. The general attitude of the censors was that they were prepared to approve the play provided the revisions cited were affected. Many did not like the play at all for its political implications; however under the guidelines of censorship it was technically acceptable provided the required changes were made. It is obvious that the censors were reluctant to approve *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* despite its conformity with the standards, as is evident in the opinion of one of the reviewers, Pedro Barceló: "Aunque centrada en una historia concreta, la obra constituye un loable ataque contra toda violencia injusta y contra toda tortura policial – demasiado universalizada, desdichadamente – que merece ser APROBADA"⁸².

⁸¹ From list of *tachaduras* attached to censors' reports dated October 27, 1964.

⁸² Report submitted by Pedro Barceló dated October 27, 1964.

Although most of the censors were of the opinion that the play was presentable with the signaled suppressions and changes, this was not a unanimous point of view. One censor, Federico Carlos Sainz de Robles, took a minority view of the play suggesting that it was worthy of presentation in its original, unedited form:

Mi criterio es radical: o se prohíbe totalmente, o totalmente se permite. Yo voto por lo segundo. Se trata de uno de nuestros mejores dramaturgos, con fama mundial. Hay que guardarle consideración y evitar en lo posible el escándalo fuera de España. ...

Mi opinion es que debe autorizarse su representación con el texto íntegro. Las tachaduras – en lápiz rojo – marcadas en el texto me parecen un poco inocentes y, además mutilan gravemente la intención del autor; quien ha procurado tocar las más delicadas cuestiones planteadas entre médico y enfermo con la mayor brevedad y con ejemplar tacto. No debe olvidarse que hace bien poco hemos asistido a las representaciones de obras como La buena sopa y El huevo de Felicien Marceau, El deseo bajo los olmos de O'Neill, Dulce pájaro de juventud y Noche de Iguana de Tennessee Williams... ¿Por qué tener distinta medida con los autores españoles, y más cuando se trata de uno de los mejores dramaturgos que tenemos para presumir por el mundo? Es indispensable una gran comprensión para no esterilizar nuestro teatro, que siempre fué de los más importantes del mundo⁸³.

Sainz de Robles' argument pointed to three justifications for the play's unedited performance: Buero's fame, the fact that foreign plays of similar critical nature were already being performed at the time, and that to prohibit the drama would have been a source of embarrassment for the regime. His position was that to prohibit this play, given all of the success and accolades that Buero had received up to this point, would have created a stir in the community that would provoke greater political problems than actually allowing the play to be performed.

No decision as to the play's fate seemed to be at hand as no final *dictamen* was issued following the October 1964 reviews. The list of revisions obviously had not made

⁸³ Report submitted by Federico Carlos Sainz de Robles dated October 27, 1964.

it back to Buero as he was not privy to the decisions made by the censors, consequently leaving him lingering in a communication vacuum. No documentation in the Archivo General exists to confirm to whom the list of *tachaduras* was communicated or when, if at all, suggesting that the Junta was prepared to simply let the company's production dates come and go without a response. This administrative silence, a *de facto* censorship of the work, resulted in the abandonment of the production of *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* by la Compañía de Ramón Clemente

As a result of administrative silence, the play's future was left in limbo for more than a year. Buero, in spite of all the difficulties that he had with winning approval of the play's text, continued to search for a theatrical company willing to represent his work. It wasn't until February 25, 1966 that la Compañía Nuria Espert made another attempt to bring Buero's work to life, this time targeting a production date for September of that year. The reports submitted in October 1964 still stood as the defining documentation on the play and there is no evidence that anything had changed either among the censors or for Buero in terms of modifications to the play during the intervening time. This, however, changed with the new submission in 1966. Two letters, both dated March 15, 1966, show the desire of the censors to bring an end to the on-going administrative silence. The first letter is from the Secretary of the Junta to Manuel Fraga, announcing that in response to the petition by la Compañía Nuria Espert, the Junta had issued a *dictamen final* recommending to him that the play be prohibited⁸⁴. The documentation

⁸⁴ Letter from the Secretary of the Junta to Minister of Information dated March 15, 1966 in which the following recommendation was made to Fraga: "Sometido a consulta del Excmo. Sr. Ministro del Departamento, el dictamen definitivo de la obra de D. Antonio Buero Vallejo, titulada "LA DOBLE HISTORIA DEL DOCTOR VALMY", atendiendo para ello a las reservas y reparos opuestos a dicha obra por la Junta de Censura de Obras Teatrales y a la recomendación formulada por la misma, el Excmo. Sr.

does not show a copy of the *dictamen* referred to in the letter, which presents some interesting questions that will be discussed shortly. What is revealing is that in the Secretary's recommendation, it was suggested that Fraga evoke Article 22 of the "Orden de 16 de febrero de 1963 por la que se constituye una Junta de Obras Teatrales". A copy of this document was included in the file on *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, with Article 22 underlined. This particular provision states:

Excepcionalmente, el Presidente [de la Junta] podrá dejar en suspenso el acuerdo del Pleno y solicitar del Ministro de Información y Turismo su revisión por una Comisión especial constituida al efecto para cada caso por las personas que el Ministro designe. Este, por propia iniciativa, podrá ordenar dicha revisión e incluso, en casos extraordinarios, acordar por sí mismo, en momento en que especiales circunstancias lo aconsejen, la decisión que considere oportuna en orden a la autorización o prohibición de la obr[as] (sic) o a las medidas d[a]das (sic) excepcionales a que se condicionen la autorización⁸⁵.

Essentially, this particular article allowed for the Minister of Information and Tourism to overturn a decision of the Junta and personally render a final judgment on the censorship of a work in extraordinary circumstances. This first letter was followed by a second letter, from the Director General of Cinematography and Theater to Manuel Fraga. This document is even more revealing in comparison to the Secretary's letter as it outlines in greater detail the problems that the censors continued to have with Buero's drama and the motives for evoking Article 22:

ASUNTO: Autorización de obras de teatro.

Para consulto, te envío:

Ministro de Departamento, haciendo uso de la facultades que le confiere el artículo 22 del Reglamento de Régimen Interior de la Junta de Censura de Obras Teatrales, aprobado por la Orden de 6 de febrero de 1964, acuerda, por decisión comunicada al Ilmo. Sr. Director General de Cinematografía y Teatro, Presidente del citado Organismo Censor, la prohibición de la obra original de D. Antonio Buero Valejo "LA DOBLE HISTORIA DEL DOCTOR VALMY".

⁸⁵ Orden de 16 de febrero de 1963 por la que se constituye una Junta de Obras Teatrales.

1º “LA DOBLE HISTORIA DEL DOCTOR VALMY”, de Antonio Buero Vallejo. Esta obra fue presentada a censura hace ya años. La Junta entendió que se podía autorizar con los cortes que figuran en el texto, impuestos tanto por lo delicado del tema, como por sus posibles implicaciones políticas. En atención a estas, entendió, además, que no debía dar dictamen definitivo sobre la obra hasta conocer la fecha en que fuera a estrenarse, teniendo en cuenta la posibilidad de que, circunstancias determinadas la hicieran peligrosa en ese momento. Por consiguiente, no hubo dictamen oficial de censura. La obra se nos presenta ahora de nuevo, con la intención de estrenarla a principios de la temporada próxima. La Junta mantiene su dictamen, pero entiende, como yo, que, tanto el tema de la obra, como la circunstancia de su autor, exigen el conocimiento y decisión del Ministro.

Es interesante señalar que Buero ha hecho en este tiempo diversas alusiones a la obra y hace pocos días en “El Alcázar”, donde ha reiterado su punto de vista (que ya apuntó con anterioridad) de que si se estrena será íntegra. Esto obliga a prever la posibilidad de que, aunque se le apruebe, si es con cortes, niegue su autorización para la representación...⁸⁶

Although the rest of the letter referred to other works, a handwritten note dated March 16 at the bottom of the letter gave additional dimension to the general opinion of the Junta.

In this postscript the Director General offered the following recommendation to Fraga:

“Ministro: Decide prohibición de la obra de Buero en uso de sus facultades reprimatorias y supresiones propuestas en la de Valle”.

This second letter offers a wealth of knowledge as to the problems *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* had, as well as the informal nature that the process of censorship could take. If Buero had made the cuts recommended by the censors the play could have potentially been staged. It is obvious that the majority of the censors accepted this reality reluctantly as the play would have met their standards if the cited cuts had been made, despite the fact that thematically it still would have proved to be a provocative piece. The norms of censorship were not sufficient to prohibit this play

⁸⁶ Report from Director General of Cinematography and Theater to Minister of Information dated March 15, 1966.

directly, which explains why administrative silence had been applied to this point. The application of the powers granted to the Minister under Article 22 was now being proposed as an out for the censors as it permitted a unilateral and arbitrary decision which could prohibit the drama through a means that the Junta, under its own rules, could not employ.

Even more interesting is the reference in this second letter pointing to Buero's role in the censorship of the play. The letter mentioned a recent interview published in *El Alcázar* in which the playwright insisted that any production of the play would employ the unaltered text. In this interview, conducted by Martín Iniesta, Buero explicitly stated his intent to see the work staged without any serious mutilation:

Iniesta – ¿Por qué sigue inédita [*La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*]?

Buero – Ha existido un cierto temor por parte de alguna empresa...

Iniesta - ¿No consideran la obra de éxito económico?

Buero – No es eso... Creen que tienen mucha “garra”.

Iniesta - ¿Entonces?

Buero – Dificultades...

Iniesta - ¿De qué tipo?

Buero – En dos ocasiones se me comunicó, verbalmente, determinados cortes en el texto que estimé muy graves...

Iniesta – Y, ¿ahora?

Buero – Si se estrena, el texto irá íntegro. Naturalmente, puede sufrir alguna corrección en el “peinado” que siempre se puede hacer antes de un estreno (Iniesta, pg. 2).

In the continuation of the interview Buero tells that he is already working on another play (what would eventually become *El tragaluz*) and gave the impression that he was preparing to move on to other projects, as well as losing hope that *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* would be staged. Buero's assertion that the play would be staged “íntegro” seems to have been interpreted as defiance by the Director General of

Cinematography and Theater, leading to the mention of the interview in his letter to Fraga.

One other aspect of censorship the letters to Fraga reveals is that censorship, although in theory objective in the nature of its application, was in many cases highly subjective to the point of hypocrisy. The handwritten postscript shows that decisions of this nature could be made on an informal, personal basis contrary to the normal, more objective process set out in the guidelines. The existence of Article 22 in the legal code of Franco's Spain essentially formalized the arbitrary exercise of censorship, especially when the formal mechanisms for literary suppression did not justify its application based on ostensible criteria in cases that might have warranted it.

The lack of a copy of the *dictamen final* relating to Nuria Espert's petition in the file at the Archivo General de la Administración Civil del Estado presents certain questions. The first is what did this document say about the play in terms of its presentability? Given that the letters to Fraga recommended the evocation of Article 22, it must be assumed that the play was considered approvable provided the changes being recommended were made according to the previous rulings made on the play. The more puzzling question is why there is no record of a response? There is no way to know for certain as the documentation offers no answers, but certain conclusions can be assumed. Since administrative silence up to this point had served as an effective means to avoid dealing with the play, resulting in companies being forced to abandon the project for lack of permission, a *dictamen final* would not have changed the play's fate. More importantly, though, as Sainz de Roble's report pointed out, to have openly prohibited the play could have been a source of embarrassment for the regime, especially on the heels of

Buero's recent interview. To have issued a definitive rejection of the play at this moment might have made the prohibition look like retribution for the author's outspokenness and in turn created a scandal. It seems this would be the most plausible explanation for why a final decision on the play had not been made after more than two years.

The play, given these events, continued to languish under administrative silence as no final ruling emerged from the correspondence with Fraga. Nuria Espert's attempt to bring Buero's tragedy to the stage was subsequently abandoned when no response came from the MIT and yet another company – the sixth one to try – submitted its petition to produce *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*. On February 24, 1967, director Juan Calot submitted documents on behalf of the Compañía Ismael Merlo-Vicky Lagos to produce the play. Of this petition, only two pieces of documentation exist in the Archivo General de la Administración Civil relating to this petition. The first is a brief biography of Juan Calot. The second document was a *dictamen final* that definitively prohibited the play⁸⁷.

After three years, six attempts to represent the drama by six different companies, and a long, languishing administrative silence, Buero's work had finally been given a definitive prohibition. Based on the 1966 letters, it is clear that the Ministry of

⁸⁷ *Dictamen Final* dated March 13, 1967 from Director General of Cinematography and Theater to the Compañía Ismael Merlo. This document represents the official prohibition of *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* after six different attempts by theatrical companies to stage the play. The dictamen states simply the following: "Visto el dictamen de la Junta de Censura de Obras Teatrales, sobre la comedia original de D. Antonio Buero Vallejo, "LA DOBLE HISTORIA DEL DOCTOR VALMY", y las supresiones que el citado Organismo estima indispensables.

Considerando que dichos cortes tienen carácter sustancial, y en aplicación de las normas vigentes de censura, aprobadas por Orden ministerial de 6 de febrero de 1964, se ha resuelto desestimar la solicitud formulada por la Compañía de "Ismael Merlo", para la representación pública de la obra "LA DOBLE HISTORIA DEL DOCTOR VALMY".

Dios guarde a Vd. muchos años.

Madrid, 13 de marzo de 1967

EL DIRECTOR GENERAL

Information and Tourism wished to completely dispense with the play. With Buero's interview with Martín Iniesta at this point long since forgotten, Manuel Fraga may have decided that a definitive prohibition of the work would not provoke the public scandal that it might have a year earlier. No documentation exists to show how the decision to suppress the play was made; however it must be assumed that Fraga used the powers granted to him under Article 22 to order the work's prohibition given that no new review of the play by the censors was conducted, meaning that the recommendation for approval, with the changes they called for, still applied.

It is interesting to point out that the open letter that Buero signed in 1964 condemning violence and asking for an investigation of the Asturian miners' charges of torture and abuse was never a factor mentioned in the censors' documentation. It is easy to imagine that Buero could have suffered censorship in part for his public position on such a controversial topic in a public forum. The lack of reference in the documentation to Buero's call for an investigation to the claims of torture to some extent argues against the existence of a "black list" of authors. It is unknown if Buero's signature of the letter was a consideration taken into account by Fraga, who was dually responsible for the State's official response to the 1964 letter as well as the final decision to censor *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*. It seems unlikely that this was a factor for a few reasons. First, Fraga initially passed on exercising his option to censor the play under Article 22 when the suggestion was made for the play's prohibition at the time of the Compañía Nuria Espert's request in 1966. Also, given that the documentation outlined the problems that the censors had with the play, and these problems remained mostly consistent, it

would seem that the prohibition of the play was not the result of political retribution for Buero's participation in the 1964 letter.

Despite the definitive rejection of the censors, the play's fate was far from sealed. In that same year – 1967 – *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* was published in both English and Spanish in the United States in the Indiana University journal *Artes Hispánicas*. This was followed by the first staging of the play – again in English – at the Gateway Theater in Chester, England (Valmy, 28). Given the continuous problems Buero had with the censors, Buero abandoned further attempts to stage *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* in Spain and subsequently moved on to new projects which would be produced and bring him acclaim in Spain: *El tragaluz* (1967); *El sueño de la razón* (1970); *Llegada de los dioses* (1971) and *La fundación* (1974). During this period he also wrote and published his “opera” *Mito* that was never staged due to problems with the composition of the music⁸⁸ (Iglesias Feijóo, pg. 375).

After a long period of dormancy *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* was resubmitted again on October 30, 1975 by Alberto González Vergel for production in the Teatro Benavente in January, 1976. The work once again found itself in the hands of the censors. The first three censors to review the work: Barceló, Mampaso, and Aragonés, repeated many of the central arguments for and against the play that were expressed in 1964. What is noticeable is that their reports include a greater degree of technicality, reflecting a more formal application of the *Normas* that Fraga had implemented for theatrical censorship. Of the three censors, only Mampaso was in dissent, qualifying

⁸⁸ As *Mito* was never submitted to the censors as a performance piece, I chose to exclude discussion of this work from this dissertation.

the drama as *prohibido*, justifying his vote to prohibit the work for the same reasons that the work had previously been prohibited: the presentation of the dream in which the baby Danielito is mutilated, and the lack of distancing from Spanish society in terms of the relationship between torture and the Spanish state. Mampaso's report was more explicit in its justification for censoring the play, and adding that the work in its entirety was in violation of Articles 14,2 and 15 of the norms for censorship⁸⁹.

The other two censors, Barceló and Aragonés, both approved the work. Barceló limited himself to saying only that the drama, although ideologically marginal, was universal enough to merit authorization. The interpretation that Aragonés took of the work was somewhat more detailed, focusing on the parallels developed between the events of the plot and Spanish society. In particular, Aragonés addressed the play's flirtation with the limits of Article 14,2. However his interpretation differed from that of Mampaso in that he found both the plot as well as the theme sufficiently approvable:

Nada hay en las vigentes normas que impidan la autorización, pues es cierto que en la 14, 2º, se refiere a atentados contra "instituciones...que el recto orden exige sean tratadas respetuosamente", también agrega que para los espectadores ha de quedar clara "la distinción entre la conducta de los personajes y lo que representan." Si el comisario Paulus hace que los hombres sometan a tortura a los prisioneros, queda claro que no lo hace por su condición de comisario de la S.P., sino por el resentimiento de haber sido rechazado por la mujer que amaba... y la posibilidad de vengarse en el hijo que pudo tener con ella y que es de otro. Por otra parte, Buero generaliza el conflicto cuando su protagonista exclama 'Donde vayamos nos estará esperando otro comisario Paulus'. Y es que resentidos con sed

⁸⁹ Report submitted by Sr. Mampaso dated November 7, 1975. In this report Mampaso cites that the play was in conflict with norms 14,2 and 15. As we saw in Chapter 2, Norm 14,2 prohibited political attacks against public institutions or ceremonies, maintaining that "el recto orden exige sean tratadas respetuosamente". Norm 15 prohibited the presentation of hatred among populations, races, or social classes, or divisions among individuals on social or moral grounds. Whether Norm 15 is really applicable in the case of *Doctor Valmy* is highly questionable, and Mampaso offered no justification in his report to merit the mention of this norm. See García Lorenzo, page 233 for a complete text of these norms.

de venganza los hay aquí y en Constantinopla. El visado, sí, por el ámbito de la tragedia⁹⁰.

In this report, Aragonés questioned whether the treatment of the police truly represented an attack on a governmental institution – in this case, the Guardia Civil. Mampaso's report also cited Article 14,2, but his interpretation of the play was that Paulus was symbolic of the police as a whole, while Aragonés viewed Paulus as being a sadistic individual, an independent entity who simply worked for the police. From the point of view of a censor, both arguments have validity, as the complexity of Paulus's character allowed for him to be seen in both lights. Buero, in creating this character, must have given considerable thought as to how to structure the Paulus character, recognizing that in order for him not to become an allegory for the police as a whole (which would trigger the censors), the character had to possess ulterior motivations and traits, which might explain the inclusion of the subtext of the history between Paulus and the Grandmother, and the link between this history and Daniel's employment by Paulus..

For lack of a unanimous vote among the three censors, the play went once again to the *pleno* for a full vote among the members. In the first vote, five censors approved the work and seven voted for prohibition, with the votes of the Secretary and the Vice President of the committee not having yet been cast. As a result of this divided result, a letter, dated December 4, 1975 was issued from the Subdirector of Theatrical Affairs to the General Director of Cinematography and Theater outlining the history of the play and the problems involved:

La autorización de la obra de Buero Vallejo "LA DOBLE HISTORIA DEL DOCTOR VALMY", fue recabada el día 25 de febrero de 1.966 por la Compañía

⁹⁰ Report submitted by Sr. Aragonés dated November 7, 1975.

de Nuria Espert. Tras una larga tramitación, la Junta de Censura emitió dictamen muy condicionado. Sus básicas limitaciones eran las siguientes:

- a. No procederá la expedición de guía si la fecha de estreno o ciclo de programación coincidiera con circunstancias coyunturales adversas (terrorismo, atentados, detenciones y condenas de extremistas, etc.).
- b. Será condición indispensable la extranjerización de los nombres de los personajes y el cambio del nombre de Surelia con el que el autor designa el país imaginario en el que transcurre la acción.
- c. cinco cortes.

Sometida la obra a consideración del Ministro Sr. Fraga por el entonces Director General de Cinematografía y Teatro, D. José M^a García Escudero, el Titular del Departamento resolvió, con fecha 15 de Marzo de 1.966, la prohibición de la pieza, haciendo uso para ello de las facultades que reglamentariamente le otorga el Artículo 22 de Reglamento de Regimen Interior de la Junta de Censura de Obras Teatrales, aprobado por Orden de 6 de Febrero de 1964 aún vigente.

La revisión de dictamen se produce al solicitar la Compañía del Teatro Benavente, de Madrid, permiso de representación para el estreno en dicho local de “LA DOBLE HISTORIA DEL DOCTOR VALMY”, según instancia de 30 de Octubre pasado que firma, como Director de la citada Compañía, D. Alberto González Vergel.

La obra es sometida a dictamen del Pleno de la Junta de Ordenación de Obras Teatrales. El resultado del estudio llevado a cabo se concreta así:

VOTOS APROBATORIOS.....5

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La temática de la pieza es sobradamente conocida. Un análisis generalizador de la tortura policiaca como hecho universal del que se deduce su condena Como factores positivos a favor de un posible dictamen aprobatorio cabe considerar:

- 1, La generalización del tema.
2. Su crítica de ámbito universal, puesto que la problemática planteada no es exclusiva de un determinado país y ni siquiera de un reducido número de estos. Tampoco, puede adscribirse a ideologías de un determinado credo político.
3. Un dictamen prohibitivo podría suponer la aceptación, o el reconocimiento desde la esfera oficial, de que nuestros procedimientos represivos o de seguridad pública y política se alínean entre aquellos que son objeto de repulsión y crítica en la obra.
4. El tratamiento dramático centrado en gran parte en la conducta del comisario Paulus que produce vengativamente a la tortura por motivaciones eróticas, permite una interpretación positiva de las normas de censura vigentes, pues si bien hay que tener en cuenta que la 14-2^a prohíbe todo lo que atente contra “instituciones que recto orden exige sean tratadas respetuosamente”, también agrega que para los espectadores ha de quedar clara “la distinción entre la

conducta de los personajes y lo que representan”; distingo aplicable favorablemente a efectos de dictamen a la obra en cuestión.

No obstante todo lo anterior, la representación de esta pieza podría resultar conflictiva, como facilmente se deduce de algunas de las precedentes consideraciones y porque son muchas las particulares y subjetivas interpretaciones que pueden darse al contexto, tantas como a diversas “tendencias y estamentos” les interese, preocupe o se sientan afectados por las más variadas razones, con o sin fundamento para ellos.

Por multiples e importantes razones que no es necesario destacar después de lo que precedentemente se expone a V.I., la decisión sobre el fallo definitivo no puede ni debe adoptarse si ésta, sea lo que fuere, no se halla respaldada por su autoridad, puesto que tantos aquellos que proponen un dictamen prohibitivo, como los que nos inclinamos por una resolución favorable, hemos procedido necesariamente por subjetivas apreciaciones claramente discernidas en este informe, carentes no obstante de aquellos elementos de juicio, conocimientos e información a los más altos niveles que solo a V.I. le permiten, por su superior criterio y jerarquía, actuar con base que garantice el éxito.

Acompaño por ultimo a este informe un ejemplar de la obra original de D. Antonio Buero Vallejo, ‘LA DOBLE HISTORIA DEL DOCTOR VALMY’⁹¹.

This document offers a revealing summary of the history of the difficulties that the play had with the censors during the previous decade. What it ultimately tells of the state of the play in 1975 is that two of the primary concerns expressed in the initial evaluations of the play in 1964 had either been resolved or were at least considered less problematic: the distancing of proper names from the Spanish language and the references to impotence and brutalization. The unresolved issues at hand in 1975 revolved around the theme of the play and its overall treatment of torture. The doubts that remained pertained to how the drama would reflect Spain in its presentation. It could still be argued that the play represented an attack on the use of violence by the police in Spain, even though no direct allusions were made in the text. Despite the validity of this argument, the censors had to grapple with the publicity that a new prohibition could

⁹¹ Letter from Subdirector for Theatrical Activities to Director General of Cinematography and Theater dated December 4, 1975.

create. In the intervening years, Buero had achieved international fame and was by the 1970's one of the best-known playwrights of his time. Furthermore, *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* had already been published and staged abroad. These factors had to be taken into account in any final decision about the work's future.

A second vote was taken a few days later, adding to the first twelve votes the votes of the secretary and the vice president of the committee, who both voted for approval of the play. When the final vote of the 14 members was tallied, it was an even split of seven censors voting for approval of the play and seven voting for prohibition. The reports attached to the record of the committee's meeting once again show that the crux of the arguments for and against the play came down to the issue of whether the presentation of the theme of torture represented a universal criticism of police torture throughout the world or whether the theme was specifically taking aim at the regime. As a result of the tie vote, a second letter was sent to the Director General of Cinematography and Theater to request a final decision of the play's future. Given the tie vote, the final decision was left in his hands. In a handwritten postscript under the heading "Resolución del Centro Directivo" the Director General emitted the following final decision: "Autorícese para mayores de 18 años. La reserva del visado de ensayo permanence con los siguientes cortes: pags 7, 36 y 40"⁹².

⁹² Letter from Director General of Cinematography and Theater to Minister of Information dated December 13, 1975. This report explains the final decision of the Junta, leading to the tie vote leaving the final approval of the play in the hands of the Minister of Information: "La Junta de Ordenación de Obras Teatrales en el curso de la Sesión Plenaria celebrada en el día de la fecha, ha ultimado el estudio censor de la obra original de Antonio Buero Vallejo 'LA DOBLE HISTORIA DEL DOCTOR VALMY', cuyo permiso de representación recaba la Compañía del Teatro Benavente de Madrid por instancia de 30 de octubre pasado, que firma D. Alberto González Vergel como Director de la misma. El resultado del estudio antes indicado, a efectos de dictamen, se concreta así:

VOTOS APROBATORIOS.....7

After over 12 years and seven attempts, *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* was approved for production, ending what was the most severe case of censorship that Buero had faced in his career. The three remaining cuts mentioned in the Director General's approval referred to two different scenes. The first is once again the segment of the dialog between the Sr. Vestido de Esmoquin and the Sra. de Traje de Lujo cited earlier in this chapter. The second cut comes from a conversation between Valmy and Daniel in which Daniel says "En Surelia estamos viviendo en tiempos difíciles usted lo sabe, en jefatura hemos tenido más de setenta detenidos a causas de los últimos disturbios". Justification is not given for why this cut was requested, though the plausible argument is that the number seventy is associated with the number of arrests made in connection to the Asturian miners' strike. The third cut cited is a line uttered by Paulus in which he informs Daniel "Si no...hablarás de todos modos, pero lo que nosotros queramos. Entonces serás uno de los jefes y tú mismo lo firmarás. Aquí no hay escape, ya lo sabes". The motivation for the elimination of this line seems to be to eliminate references to the radical elements of government in the application of brutality.

According to Barry Jordan, Buero did ultimately make the minor changes to the text as required by the censors, and *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* opened at the

VOTOS PROHIBITIVOS.....7

En el cómputo anterior se hallan contabilizados los dictámenes propuestos por la totalidad de los vocales que integran el Organismo Censor, incluidos el del Vocal Secretario y del Vicepresidente de la Junta. Ante el empate de votos entiende la Junta de Ordenación de Obras Teatrales que procede el decisorio de la Presidencia que ostenta el Ilmo. Sr. Director General de Teatro y Espectáculos. De todo lo cual como Secretario doy fe, en Madrid, a doce de diciembre de mil novecientos setenta y cinco.

Teatro Benvente of January 29, 1976. The play would become one of Buero's most successful productions with more than 600 performances (Jordan, pg. 19). It would also be the last work that Buero would stage under the scrutiny of the censors.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The death of Francisco Franco on November 20, 1975 came to represent one of the most pivotal events in modern Spanish history. Over the course of the next three years, Spain would undergo a radical transformation from dictatorship to democracy. Although Franco's passing set the stage for these changes and presented the opportunity for a more open society, the presence of censorship did not immediately disappear. The ascension of Juan Carlos I to the throne after Franco's death in and of itself did not bring instantaneous change to Spain and its institutions either, since the ministries of Spain were still controlled by Franco's hard-line appointees. For lack of both initiative and a desire for change by these ministers, the processes of censorship and their ideological motivations were largely left unencumbered as it related to the theater in the first months of Juan Carlos's reign. The case of the review of *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* in December, 1975 shows that the mechanisms of the regime for censoring public performances was still in place and vigorously exercised even after Franco's demise.

The end of state control of expression was a gradual process that represented part of the greater path that Spain followed in its transition to democracy in the first years after the death of the dictator. The first attempt to liberalize the policies of censorship came as early as 1974 under Pío Cabanillas' short-lived tenure as head of the MIT. Although the reforms he instituted applied more to the press than to theater, the one significant change that came to the stage was a more permissive posture toward nudity. With Cabanillas' policies also came less interference with what was published in

newspapers and magazines, although still no one dared to attempt to express political criticism against Franco and the regime while the *Caudillo* was still alive, nor even in the months after his death. The relaxation on the presentation of nudity was short-lived, however. When Franco discovered that Cabanillas had permitted the publication of magazines including images of naked women, as well as the printing of photos of bikini-clad women in mainstream newspapers, Cabanillas was hastily replaced by a more reactionary minister, Angel Herrera.(Carr and Fusi, pg. 197).

Despite the easing of restrictions on the press, theater was still carefully watched by the censors in the first months after Franco's death. Although the sexual revolution was emerging in Spanish society as suggested by Cabanillas' brief *apertura*, Herrera's reversal of Cabanillas' policies resulted in a crackdown of displays of nudity on the Spanish stage which endured into 1976, leading to cases of works being shut down by the government (O'Leary, pg. 201). Censorship of political or moral content went unchanged during this period, as we have already seen in *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*. The first steps to dismantling the apparatus for theatrical censorship did not come until the second half of 1976 when more moderate leaders under the transitional government of Adolfo Suárez replaced members of the old guard appointed by Franco. The formation of this new government was essential to social and political reform because the ministers who resigned controlled the general bureaucracy of the regime and would have resisted the democratic reforms Juan Carlos wished to implement. As the Suárez government prepared for the free election of a transitional government, the atmosphere in Spain gradually became favorable for further liberalization of expression. O'Leary reminds us that although censorship as a practice was mostly discontinued under the Suárez

government, the laws governing censorship remained mostly intact during the transition, even after the duties of theatrical review had been transferred to the Ministry of Culture. Although in principle the role of the censors evolved into one of rating works rather than editing their content, the censors were in theory empowered to withhold approval of works under certain conditions even during this period. The definitive abolition of literary suppression did not come until the ratification of the constitution of 1978, which in Article 20 guarantees the rights of free speech and press (O'Leary, pgs. 208-210).

By the time Buero was prepared to stage his next play, *La detonación*, in 1977, the process of *consulta previa* had been radically altered. Although it was still necessary to submit scripts to the MIT, the way that these scripts were treated reflected the change in the times. The contents of the file on *La detonación*, in contrast to all of the works Buero had previously submitted, appear to have been approved without comment⁹³. Whereas works submitted under the dictatorship had been subject to review to identify and suppress material that ran counter to what was considered politically or morally acceptable to the regime, this was not the case with *La detonación*. No evidence exists of any review of the work by a censor, suggesting that the submission of scripts to the MIT had in fact become nothing more than a bureaucratic formality. This lack of documentation represented a sharp contrast in the procedure of how theatrical review had been conducted less than two years earlier.

Beyond this file on *La detonación*, no documentation exists in the Archivo General de la Administración Civil relating to any of Buero's subsequent works, even though the censors continued to operate in the minor role of rating theatrical

performances. This role, it seems, continued even beyond the enactment of the 1978 constitution. In 1979, a new review of *El tragaluz* was conducted by three Franco-era censors now working for the Ministry of Culture. The role and intent reflected the limited scope of deciding for what ages a performance was appropriate, such as is employed in cinema in democratic societies today. Unlike the detailed forms used by the censors under the Franco regime, the reports they issued were made on a streamlined, standardized form in which permission for performance is requested, followed by the censors' assessment for what ages the work was appropriate. The form did contain a section at the end where the censor could also make comments, though in the case of *El tragaluz* no comments were made besides the work's approval for an audience 14 years or older⁹⁴. Why no such documentation exists for *Le detonación* is unclear, since it is likely that a similar review for rating the work would have taken place. It can only be assumed that the documents were either lost or, possibly, that during the transformation of the process, the role of the censors was in limbo, resulting in complete inaction on their part.

With the end of censorship came the end of the need for using *posibilismo* as an approach to writing. Authors were now free to write without exercising the restraint that Buero had advocated in his debate with Sastre many years earlier. Although Buero would go on to write several more plays in a free, democratic Spain, it is the plays that he wrote under the constraints of the dictatorship and the scrutiny of the censors that to this day tend to define his career. Buero emerged from the dictatorship as one of the most prolific

⁹³ File C 85673 E375-77

⁹⁴ File C 87889 E 454-79

and revered playwrights of his generation. His overall success and fame derive not only from his ability to consistently stage works under the Franco regime, but more importantly from his ability to stage works of a critical nature despite the limitations on free speech. His success in staging his plays despite these limitations is a testament to the success of *posibilismo* as an approach to writing under censorship.

Looking at the canon of Buero's work in retrospect, it is clear that Buero was successful in incorporating political and social thought into his plays and still able to stage nearly all of these dramas despite censorship. Throughout his career Buero wrote with a concern for the problems plaguing society, in many cases addressing topics that proved problematic for the Franco regime. As we have seen, the success of *posibilismo* was rooted not so much in *what* was said so much as in *how* it was said. *Posibilismo* represented an approach to writing under the repression of the dictatorship that took into account the limitations on expression that the regime imposed. Its success as a means of writing under censorship is owed to several factors. For one, Buero recognized the existence of censorship as a factor to consider in the writing process. As a result of this recognition, he addressed social issues in a non-provocative way in order to see his works reach the stage. In order to achieve this, Buero employed a variety of literary devices to allude to his themes in cases where explicit manifestations of his thoughts proved too confrontational to present to the censors. Through the use of stylistic and structural strategies such as the application of open endings and symbolism, as well as the contextualization of social criticism in universal or historical settings, Buero was able to communicate his concerns for society and its problems to an audience without representing an ideological threat to the regime.

As the documentation of the censors has shown, *posibilismo* was not an approach designed to hide social criticism. The censors were, with only a few exceptions, completely conscious of the thematic intentions of Buero's plays. Their acceptance of these themes was not rooted in the works' conformity to the policies and ideology of the Franco regime, nor was their acceptance the result of a naïve interpretation of what the plays were intended to communicate. The censors allowed for the vast majority of Buero's plays to be staged because they did not represent a direct attack on the regime or its institutions given that Buero framed his themes in a way that did not explicitly implicate a connection between the events of his works and the Spanish state. In the early years of Buero's career this was especially true, given that many of these early dramas dealt with ethical and moral issues relating to man as an individual, and not centered on the conduct of government or society as a whole. Even when Buero entered into a more socially-oriented theater in 1958, the nature of his theater was such that criticism was presented in a universal context which could be extended to societies everywhere, even when the plots of these plays were set in the backdrop of Spanish history and society. The censors' acceptance of the presentation of these themes was a result of their interpretation of these works as being centered on the problems of human society as a whole and not a critique of Franco's Spain. Buero's application of an open ending furthered this interpretation, as he did not offer solutions to the social problems expounded in his works. The avoidance of concrete resolution disarmed the works of any call to action that could trigger their suppression, making their themes palatable to the *vocales*.

The success of *posibilismo* as an approach to writing under censorship was, as we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4, dependent on Buero's comprehension of how the censors

would interpret and respond to his scripts. Buero sidestepped censorship by approaching writing with a preconceived idea of what the censors would allow and what they would suppress. We have seen through the censors' comments that Buero was successful in writing his scripts in such a way that when reviewed, the vast majority only incurred minor suppressions of specific words or lines. To achieve this minimal level of *tachaduras*, Buero developed his scripts in such a way that the wording of his dialog, as well as the development of the overall plot, communicated theme using subtle language and imagery that would conserve the work's message in the most explicit terms possible without provoking suppression. This required Buero to employ a degree of self-censorship, restraining the language he employed out of recognition that to be more open in his expression would increase the likelihood that his works would suffer a greater degree of scrutiny. In some cases this resulted in Buero's choice to use foreign names for many of his characters and settings, in order to avoid having his social arguments being perceived by the censors as a direct criticism of the regime and its policies. This self-restraint and anticipation of the censors' reactions to his works was a crucial part of the success of *posibilismo* as a writing approach, motivating him to find creative alternatives to framing social commentary in order to communicate theme in a way that the censors would find palatable.

Besides the care that Buero took in choosing his words, the success of *posibilismo* was also dependant on his ability to communicate theme on a non-verbal level. The ways in which he developed the characters of his plays served to underscore the themes of his works. Motifs such as blindness, deafness and psychological disorders were successful in providing powerful symbols that enhanced the overall message and presentation of his

dramas. These disorders, and their application in creating an immersion effect to draw the audience into the experience of the plight of these characters, allowed Buero to create a greater sense of connection between character and spectator. This emotional connection allowed for the theme to be conveyed on an implicit level that the censors found acceptable. The optimism of the visionary protagonist, and his or her downfall, also contributed to the thematic exposition of Buero's works. These heroes served to frame Buero's arguments, and their subsequent tragic failures later highlighted their aspirations.

The presentation of theme was also accentuated through scenery and staging. The use of historical settings in some of Buero's works allowed the audience to make connections between problems depicted in a commonly understood past and the present in which they viewed the play. The analogies that these historical contexts provided to the works augmented the social arguments that were elaborated in the plots of these historical dramas by framing the problems of the present in a context grounded in depictions of events in the past that did not provoke the censors. This is also true of Buero's use of the physical space in which action of some his works took place. In works such as *Historia de una escalera* and *El tragaluz*, elements like the stairwell and the skylight took on a symbolic value that added to these works' themes. In *En la ardiente oscuridad*, the enclosed space of the school accentuated the physical inequity that their blindness truly posed. The metamorphosis of the scenery in *La fundación* drew the audience into the world of Tomás's schizophrenic denial of his imprisonment. The stage and the ambiance of these , in combination with the application of lighting techniques and sound, allowed for the expression of certain ideas in cases where the communication of these ideas could not be communicated through dialog.

Although the application of these motifs provided Buero with the tools to allow him to transcend the limitations of censorship, *posibilismo* did have certain limitations. Despite Buero's pragmatic approach to writing under Franco-era censorship, the majority of the scripts he wrote were required to undergo a degree of revision in order to gain approval. The call for these changes was in good part the result of Buero's ignorance of the censors' criteria as well as the personal receptions of the works by the censors. Although it's safe to say that Buero probably had a general understanding of what was prohibited by the censors of the Franco regime, it was impossible for him to anticipate every possible reaction to his works, given he was not privy to the exact terms under which his works would be reviewed. Since only clairvoyance would have allowed him to be able to second guess the personal reactions of each censor, it was impossible to foresee all of the potential problems his works might have encountered. It is also possible that Buero deliberately included certain lines in order to test the limits of what was permissible under censorship in order gauge what he could successfully incorporate into his plays. This is only speculation, as Buero has never stated that he ever deliberately tried to push the envelope to test the boundaries of censorship. Either way, the majority of Buero's scripts only required minor adjustments, none of which inhibited the presentation of the theme or caused a distortion of the plot. These changes primarily consisted of the rephrasing or omission of a few specific words or lines which either contained ideas that were politically problematic or went against what was considered to be in good taste. This minimal degree of suppression shows that Buero was largely successful in applying *posibilismo* in the elaboration of his scripts to present themes in an innocuous manner that the censors would be likely to accept.

One of the key limitations to the success of *posibilismo* was the subjective nature of the censors' overall process for reviewing works. Prior to Manuel Fraga's implementation of the *Normas sobre la calificación de obras teatrales* in 1963, the criteria for censorship was not clearly elaborated in such a way that guaranteed uniformity. Even after the dissemination of these guidelines to the censors, subjectivity was not completely eliminated. Through the analysis of the *Normas* in Chapter 2, it is clear that despite their outward appearance of creating an objective process for reviewing theatrical works through the codification of the norms of censorship, certain ambiguous, open-ended provisions were included that allowed for the censors to suppress material based on purely subjective grounds. Although the *Normas* gave the censors a clearer blueprint of how to approach a work and spelled out what material was explicitly prohibited, their subjective response could not be completely eliminated given that literary reception is, by nature, a subjective process formed out of the collective beliefs of a reader. In the review of several of Buero's works we have seen the censors express varying points of view in regards to their receptions of the same works during the course of a review. The nebulous provisions included in the *Normas* played to this, allowing the censors latitude in cases where a work's content was found to be politically or morally problematic, even in the absence of statute explicitly forbidding the material in question.

In the cases of the three works that were outright prohibited from being staged during the dictatorship, we have seen that in the case of one, *Palabras en la arena*, that its suppression was not the result of a failure in Buero's "posibilist" position, but that its prohibition was rooted in the circumstances of when and where it was to have been performed. When originally written, *Palabras en la arena* had been intended for the

limited audience of a *teatro de cámara* and had been approved for staging under these terms. Its failure to receive approval came as the result of one censor's concerns about its public performance during Holy Week. It was in this context that the drama's acceptability came into question, given the work's religious nature. Given that Buero lived in Madrid and the production in question was to have taken place in Barcelona it is likely that he was unaware of the petition for this staging of the work and its subsequent prohibition for performance during religious events. This would explain why he never mentioned *Palabras en la arena* as being among his works that had suffered censorship. Given the specific nature of this suppression of the play, as well as the unusual addendum to the *dictamen final* barring the work from being performed during religious holidays, it is hard to label the situation surrounding the 1958 prohibition of this work a failure of *posibilismo*, since the censors' decision did not represent a total prohibition of the work.

The case of *Aventura en lo gris* can be viewed as both a failure and a success of *posibilismo*, depending upon whether one focuses on the work's original submission or its overall history. The censors' final decision about the play's script as it was originally written in 1952 represented a failure of *posibilismo* as a result of the various political and moral problems they saw in the text. The censors had several concerns: the allusions to Mussolini and to circumstances mirroring the Spanish Civil War, his experimentation with the dream state of the second act, and the problems Buero had with securing a theatrical company to produce the play. By Buero's own admission, this drama was an experiment, and ultimately one that failed. The combination of these factors resulted in a work that, as has been explained, was too problematic for the censors to permit. Yet despite the work's inability to gain approval in 1954, *Aventura en lo gris* can in its long-

term history be considered a triumph for *posibilismo* because Buero was able to revisit the script at a later time and address the problems that plagued the work earlier, ultimately creating a more critical work in the process. He did have to alter the script in order to present a work that the censors would accept – changing the names of certain characters to enhance the universality of the play, as well as toning down the eroticism that the dream sequence embodied. What he did not remove from the text, however, was the character Golver (who he renamed Goldman in the revised version) in whom the censors saw parallels with Mussolini. Although certain dialog was altered, the character Goldman was left largely unaltered. The same is true of the work's overall depiction of the suffering brought about by war, which was if anything furthered by the changes that Buero made. Although Sastre might have pointed to such revisions as evidence that Buero was conforming in order to see the play staged, what Buero in fact achieved by modifying the original script was to enhance the work's antiwar message when the final version was staged. The level of criticism that the play brought to bear on the nature of war argues against *posibilismo* as being a conformist position toward theatrical production, since the work's theme was not warmly embraced.

The single greatest limitation of *posibilismo*, however, is when the degree of compromise required by the censors resulted in the alteration of the text's intention. Although Buero accepted that the need to compromise with the censors was one of the crucial factors in making *posibilismo* an effective approach to writing under censorship, there were lines that he was unwilling to cross simply for the sake of seeing his works performed. In the case of *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, Buero was willing to make adjustments to the text of his drama, particularly changing the names of his characters to

eliminate any association with their potential Spanish origin. Buero was not, however, willing to compromise the overall plot and theme of his work by deleting references to torture and the key scenes of his omniscient narrators. As these scenes were crucial to the immersion effect of the work, Buero refused to alter these passages, recognizing that to do so would have altered the play's emotional impact and message. The problematic history that this play had with the censors shows that his refusal to sacrifice these key segments of the work, as well as his public declaration in *El Alcázar* that he would not pursue the production of *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* unless it included these passages, were what led to the drama's prohibition in its time.

The cases of *Aventura en lo gris* and *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* with the censors ironically give some credence to Sastre's arguments against the concept of *imposibilismo*. When he argued that all works should be considered possible, even in cases where such works are momentarily impossible, he suggested in part that censorship was such a highly subjective and constantly evolving institution that social constraints would change to allow for the eventual production of plays prohibited in an earlier time. In its initial submission to the censors in 1952, *Aventura en lo gris* concerned the censors in part for the parallels developed between the flight of the dictator Golver and the final days of Mussolini. This concern did not reappear in the 1963 reviews of the play. The memory and significance of Mussolini and his flight from Italy, still recent history at the time the work was originally submitted, had faded by the time the work was resubmitted a decade later. From the censors' point of view, it is possible that they were no longer concerned about the allusions that Golver's character presented to an audience nearly twenty years after the fact. The twelve years that it took for *La doble historia del Doctor*

Valmy to reach the stage represents a more extreme example validating Sastre's arguments. Although the work was censored in its time for political reasons, it was still a work that was eventually succeeded in being staged, albeit only after Franco's death. In the case of this work, Buero was in line with Sastre's belief that playwrights should not accommodate the censors when accommodation would lead to a deformation of the social message of the work. *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* ultimately represents the exception to the rule of Buero's theater, as it is the one play that exceeded the limits of *posibilismo* in its time.

The Buero-Sastre polemic of 1960 served to question how theater should have been approached under the dictatorship. Given the overall success that Buero had in staging under the Franco regime, compared to the greater degree of repression that Sastre suffered, it is clear that Buero's approach was the more successful of the two in terms of bringing a work to the stage. While Sastre either saw many of his works prohibited in their time or simply decided to withhold other works out of recognition that they had no possibility of being staged under the Franco regime, Buero was able to see all but three of his plays staged without difficulties, and of those three, only one, *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, failed to premiere during Franco's lifetime. This rate of success shows that *posibilismo* as an approach was successful in terms of bringing works to the stage.

The broader question posed by the *posibilismo/imposibilismo* debate, though, is whether Sastre was justified in his assertion that *posibilismo* represented collaboration with the regime or, as a bare minimum, a conformist position? Sastre's key argument against the notion of a "posibilist" theater was that the role of theater as a medium to communicate social criticism was compromised by the accommodations that Buero

postulated were necessary in order to ensure that Spain's theatrical tradition would not disappear as a result of Francoist censorship. My belief is that Sastre's position was unfounded. The argument against the notion that Buero's position represented collaboration with the regime has been made quite clear throughout the course of this dissertation. At no time did Buero adopt a social or political stance in line with the ideological viewpoint of the regime. Many of his early works were well received by the censors because of themes he developed centered on the human condition and were largely apolitical. In the cases of works with political overtones, Buero consistently took a stance against social injustice, often times presenting themes that were brought into question for how they reflected upon the regime when reviewed and in the end only earned the censors' reluctant acceptance. In a number of his works, and in all of those written since *Un soñador para un pueblo*, Buero's scripts developed themes and made statements that not only conflicted ideologically with many of the policies of the dictatorship, but took certain policies of the dictatorship (torture, political oppression, censorship, to name a few) to issue. The documentation of the censors' interpretations and concerns about the plots and themes of Buero's works show that in several cases they expressed varying degrees of disdain for the topics that Buero's plays addressed, and in many cases did in fact recommend the suppression of material they found questionable.

Sastre's belief that *posibilismo* required conformism on the part of the author is a more difficult question to address and depends on what meaning of "conformism" is understood. It is true that in order to stage most of his works, Buero did accept many of the cuts that the censors called for. If conformism is understood as an acceptance of the censors' restrictions, then labeling Buero a conformist is justifiable, as he was required to

adhere to the limitations that the censors imposed on his scripts. His willingness to make these compromises resulted from the recognition that his ability to transfer his works to the stage was dependant upon receiving their authorization. The cuts he accepted, however, did not in and of themselves detract from the plots and themes of his works in such a way that compromised what he was trying to show his audience in his works. Because Buero's most important motivation was to see his works performed, to transmit the messages of his plays to the public, he was willing to sacrifice a small portion of his text provided that the deleted lines did not result in a shift in the play's plot or theme. Since thematically Buero's works did not reflect the political values of the regime, it is difficult to call him conformist in his ideology, even though he was resigned to accept changes to his works that he might otherwise never have made.

Antonio Buero Vallejo will be remembered as one of the most important Spanish dramatists of the 20th century for both his contribution to the revitalization of the Spanish theater in the postwar era and as a voice for social change during the Franco years. He will also forever be synonymous with *posibilismo*. Through this approach to writing and the creative solutions that he found under censorship, he was able to transcend the limitations placed on expression and helped to ensure the continuation of Spain's theatrical tradition during the dictatorship. His "posibilist" approach not only served to sidestep the barriers imposed by the *consulta previa* of the regime, but also served to enhance his works by requiring him to find creative alternatives to express himself. The end result of this labor was a series of plays that have both entertained the Spanish public and conveyed an opposing viewpoint to what he saw as the crucial problems of a society under a repressive regime. Even today, more than thirty years after Franco's death,

Buero's work remains timeless as a result of the universality of his humanistic concerns. It is because the themes that concerned him are ones that either have existed or continue to exist in all societies that Buero's works will resonate with audiences well into the future.

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